

ANNEKE B. MULDER-BAKKER

LIVES OF THE ANCHORESSES



THE RISE OF THE URBAN RECLUSE IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

TRANSLATED BY MYRA HEERSPINK SCHOLZ

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Lives of the Anchoresses

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*Lives of the
Anchoresses*

The Rise of the Urban Recluse in
Medieval Europe

Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker

Translated by
Myra Heerspink Scholz

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For Hemmo

Hij noemde haar zijn hartediefje,
haar werk liet hij begaan,
geen zorgen had hij om zijn liefje,
hijzelf liet 't watertje niet staan;
in kamerjas verliep zijn leven. . . .

—Alexander Poesjkin, *Jewgeni Onegin* 2: xxxiv; unpublished
trans. Hemmo Mulder

Her husband, loving her with passion,
left her to follow her own line,
trusted her in lighthearted fashion,
and wore his dressing-gown to dine.
His life went sailing in calm weather. . . .

—Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, 2: xxxiv; trans.
Charles Johnston (London: Scholar Press, 1977), 59

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I

Bees Without a King

“For among bees there is a king,” declared Bishop Robert of Thourotte in Liège in 1246, therefore holy women must live in communities under a leader.

AT THE MARTINI CHURCH in Groningen, showpiece of a city still young in the thirteenth century, lived an anchoress. Enclosed in her cell, she was devoted to God in a highly conspicuous way. Directly on the Great Marketplace, visible and audible to those passing through the heart of the city, she lived the “life of angels” and functioned as a spiritual intermediary for the faithful of the town.

When a German merchant residing in Groningen once found himself in serious trouble, it was with her that he sought refuge. On one of his trips to the East he had managed to acquire a precious relic—the arm of John the Baptist, he claimed—and had it bricked into the masonry of his house. This made him feel invulnerable. When a large fire broke out in the city—probably the fire of the 1190s—and all the people made frantic attempts to rescue their possessions, he stayed defiantly in the tavern, sure that his house would be safe. This aroused the fury and suspicion of his fellow residents. Feeling that his life was in danger, he entrusted the arm to the recluse and fled from the town.

And so it happened, Caesarius of Heisterbach writes, that Groningen acquired its most precious relic, source of spiritual and material welfare of the city. Because the recluse “could not keep the secret to herself and told someone what had been entrusted to her, who in turn informed the citizenry, the latter immediately carried off the relic and brought it to the church.” Subsequently the arm, displayed in a gilt reliquary and decorated with precious stones, attracted hundreds of pilgrims to the Martini

Church. And the city owed all this to the anchoress who had proved herself a confidante to a merchant in need and an intermediary who brought blessings on the town. Although Caesarius's anecdote contains some gentle criticism of the recluse—typical that a woman couldn't keep her mouth shut—her fame as an anchoress forestalled any possible doubts about the authenticity of the relic.

For the rest, we know nothing about the recluse at the Martini Church. Caesarius remains the sole witness.¹

For modern readers an anecdote like this one raises many questions. How exactly should we picture a medieval anchoress of the kind we glimpse here, living in the shadow of a large city church? Was she an exceptional case or a phenomenon encountered more often? Was it only women who lived like this or men as well? What kind of lives did they lead, and what significance did they have for their surroundings? And why did certain believers opt for this form of life, which from our perspective seems rather bizarre? What could possibly have attracted people to the anchoritic life? Was it escapism, an attempt to flee from society? But the Groningen anchoress appears to have chosen the center of the town as the place to devote herself to God. She also seems to have played an active role in the community. A simple urge to escape is therefore out of the question. What was her motive, then? And why did she not choose to live in the forest or the mountains, like the hermits familiar to us from chivalric romances? Or was that option open only to men? Were there differences between men and women in this area? And if so, why?

Historians have raised these questions before, especially those about the relation between anchorites and their environment. Because the sources yield little in the way of answers—usually, as in the Groningen case, information is provided only indirectly—scholars generally do no more than repeat old answers, particularly those that emerged in the nineteenth century or even in the pious thought of the Counter Reformation. In the typical handbook or encyclopedia, often a collaborative product of theologians and church historians, we read that such women were deeply religious persons who abstained from marital life and motherhood for the sake of their spiritual bridegroom, Christ.² They shared this ideal, we are told, with nuns and devout sisters who had also bid farewell to an ordinary life, but unlike them, anchoresses lived in total solitude. Isolated from the outside world, with the door of their cell bolted and the window

covered with a black curtain, they lived as if at the gates of heaven, praying day and night in the seclusion of their cell. A *vita angelica* it was called, a life of angels. Immersed in their meditation, anchoresses yearned for the moment when the bridegroom would take them by the hand and lead them into the heavenly bridal chamber.

The scholars who wrote these books, themselves without exception men formed by the nineteenth-century Victorian ideal of the good housewife who longs for her husband or father in the seclusion of her home, could not imagine anything different. For them, both nuns and anchoresses sublimated a conventional middle-class ideal onto the spiritual plane.³ They do not distinguish between enclosed anchoresses (often referred to as recluses) and female hermitesses in the forest. Nor do they describe the remarkable changes that took place in the course of the Middle Ages. The only real difference they see between nuns in a convent cell and recluses in an anchorhold is one of degree. Nuns pursued their ideal in the community of the cloister; recluses had to manage without that safety net. In total solitude, like bees without a king, they strove for perfect contemplation. The fact that the sparse information in the sources does not seem to support their ideas—witness our woman in Groningen, who was certainly not cut off from life in the city—apparently gave them no second thoughts.

Historical research of recent years has taken a different tack.⁴ Inspired by innovative studies such as Peter Brown's "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," French and Italian scholars in particular have approached the role of recluses and anchorites from a historical-social perspective, placing it in the context of the times.⁵ Under the leadership of André Vauchez, director of the École française in Rome, and Sofia Boesch Gajano, founder and great inspirer of the Italian Gruppo di ricerca "Santi e culto dei santi," historians, art historians, and anthropologists have freed themselves from the framework of church history and dogma to begin studying the holy in all its facets from what we might label a profane perspective. Research into anchoritism has also found a place in their program. Sofia Boesch herself wrote a pioneering study of Chelidonia, the female successor of Benedict in the cave of Subiaco, showing especially how the bones and veneration were subjected to the manipulations of power politics. Anna Benvenuti Papi inventoried the many recluses in Florence and Tuscany who lived as in a grave, *Velut in sepulchro*, and Gabriella Zarri did groundbreaking research into a group of

living saints and recluses, *Sante Vive*, who were held in high esteem at the humanist courts of Italy. These women, Zarri maintains, combined mystical ecstasy, gifts of prophecy, and telepathy with thaumaturgical powers and political influence. They had “a preference for the mixed life, held to be superior to the cloistered life if not the contemplative one,” which included a “sense of having a social and ecclesiastical mission.”⁶ This study shows Zarri to be inspired by issues and approaches from Anglo-American gender studies, a fruitful route.

In England there is a much longer tradition of a more historical and literary-historical approach to medieval anchorites. Rotha Mary Clay’s 1914 book still provides the foundation for all historical studies of hermits and recluses.⁷ Ann Warren supplemented her inventory and devoted special study to the financial relations of anchorites with their—often noble—patrons. These historians, however, made no essential distinction between hermits in the forest and anchorites at a church or monastery, although the large majority of the ones they found were of the latter type.⁸ This led to the assumption—a misconception—that England was exceptionally rich in anchoresses. The Continent may have had its beguines and other devout women, but England had an almost exclusive claim to hundreds of recluses.⁹ More recently, English scholarship has concentrated mainly on the anchoritic spirituality of the *Ancrene Wisse* and devout literature. As a result, it is now largely the domain of literary historians.¹⁰

A Special Type of Anchorite: The Urban Recluse

This book deals with the group of individual faithful who, like the woman in Groningen, chose to be bricked into a cell at a church or chapel, for a given period of time or for the rest of their lives, in order to devote themselves entirely to God. It zooms in on the women among them. In modern scholarship these people are commonly referred to as “recluses,” a medieval term derived from the Latin verb *recludere*, to extricate oneself. The topic here is therefore urban recluses, not hermitesses living in the forest. A study of the latter type would not even be possible, since society at the time did not allow for solitary female hermits.¹¹ Men withdrew into the woodlands and the mountains but also had themselves enclosed at a church or monastery. Both paths were open to them, while women could only become recluses. One of the intriguing questions that

this book seeks to answer is how we should account for this difference in possibilities.

A clear distinction must be made between recluses and other types of female religious, especially beguines and members of closed orders, that is, nuns in contemplative cloisters. Beguines were devout women—"laypersons" in the terminology of the Church—who simply led a religious life in the town where they lived. They earned their living with weaving, teaching, or caring for the sick, just as other independent women did. Living either alone or in a small group in a convent or beguineage, they devoted themselves as much as possible to contemplation. Beguines thus led a mixed life, with a combination of active and contemplative elements. In the course of the thirteenth century their communities began to form legally recognized institutions, but the women themselves continued to live without a monastic rule and remained free of any official ties with religious orders.¹² It was on these points that they differed from nuns who had taken a vow and obeyed a rule. Some of these nuns lived under *clausura*. Although the Latin *recludere*, like *includere*, is derived from *claudere*, to close, the three terms are charged with essentially different, highly contrastive meanings in both medieval and modern usage. *Clausura* denotes the secluded nature of a contemplative convent. A term used specifically for nuns, not for monks, it refers to a community of religious women who live isolated from the outside world, not to the enclosed life of the individual recluse. Ever since the time of the Migrations, Church authorities had considered it safer for nuns to live behind convent walls, in *clausura*. The word carries connotations of being (involuntarily) locked away; in common medieval usage it could mean "fence," "cattle park," or even "prison." Ducange gives the following definition: *septum in quo animalia custodientur*, "the enclosure in which animals are kept"—or nuns, we might add. From the thirteenth century onward, popes and prelates tried to make *clausura* mandatory for all nuns. Not until the Counter Reformation did they finally succeed.¹³

Includere has the same root as *claudere* but in medieval usage was applied to cenobites, monks and nuns, who sought a kind of superasceticism outside their own monastery (see below); and especially for women who lived in *inclusoria* at an abbey, in the charge of an abbot, either alone or in small groups. Because there were so absurdly few women's abbeys, women opted for this informal monastic existence. Some *inclusoria* attracted so many religious women that they were able to establish independent abbeys of their own. Hildegard of Bingen, who was an include at

Dissibodenberg and from there founded the women's abbey on the Rupertsberg, is the best-known example.¹⁴ Includes were therefore religious who followed a rule, owed obedience to an abbot, and transferred whatever possessions they had to the monastery. Formally or otherwise, we have to consider them monastics. Unlike recluses, they could be found in the immediate vicinity of a large abbey or (closed) convent in the city, not at a large city church.¹⁵

In contrast, *recludere*, also derived from *claudere*, denoted in classical Latin the opposite of "to lock away," namely "to un-close," "to disclose," or even "to reveal." Although in Late Latin it came to mean "to shut off" on analogy with *claudere*, it retained its active charge: a believer opted for seclusion, thus freeing himself or herself from a restrictive environment. *Reclusio* was the separateness and mental independence a person sought as the way to be open to God. Ducange: *reclusio qua quis ad vacandum Deo in cella se includit*, "the seclusion whereby someone encloses himself or herself in a cell in order to be free for God."¹⁶ Reduced to their etymological essence, recluses were therefore faithful who freed themselves from the confining bonds of society but did not necessarily remove themselves from society as such. They sought a spot where they could devote themselves completely to the love of God, without a fixed rule and without an imposed form of life. Like the Groningen anchoress, they typically chose to live in a cell near the main church of a town or some other strategically located church or chapel. This book is about these voluntary recluses. Anchoresses of this type gained unprecedented esteem and greatly influenced religious life in the later Middle Ages. Dozens, more likely hundreds, of devout women converted to this way of life.¹⁷ We almost have to assume that every small town had its own recluse. In the oral culture of medieval Christianity they fulfilled a role that for the most part eludes us, dependent as we are on written sources.

It should be noted that no matter how clear the conceptual distinctions introduced here may seem in the abstract, medieval authors often failed to discriminate between them in concrete usage. Or they lumped all devout women together under the rubric *mulieres religiosas*. We then have to investigate each case individually to find out which of the categories described above the writer had in mind. An additional problem is that in English usage "ancren" and "anchorite," both apparently derived from *anachoreta*, the believer who retreats far into the desert, seem to have been used indiscriminately for all forms of solitary seclusion.

Research Questions

Four complexes of questions suggested by this etymological skeleton will be fleshed out in this study. First, what sort of phenomenon was this free reclusive life? When did it emerge, what were its characteristics, and what motivated women to seek out this seclusion in the middle of the community? Why were there no women in the forest while they were standing in line for a *reclusorium* in the city—and precisely at a time when men were losing interest in both forms of solitude? This leads to the next complex of questions, those concerning the relation of recluses with the world around them. What exactly did these women hope to achieve with this form of life? How did they view their existence? Did they make any statements justifying their choice? The third complex revolves around the question of gender. While the Church preferred to have devout women enter a convent, a substantial number of them continued to seek a God-centered life in the city. Why did so many refuse the seclusion of the convent, from humanistic Italy to urban Brabant and Liège? Was life in an anchorhold a shortcut for women who were otherwise doomed to powerlessness?¹⁸ Did their choice, in other words, have something to do with the power structures in the Church—and with the ambitions of religious women? Descriptions of the anchoritic life by church historians or literary studies of recluse spirituality do not yield the analytical models needed to answer these questions. Like Gabriella Zarri, I agree with Joan Wallach Scott that gender is “a useful category of historical analysis” and offers the research tools needed.¹⁹ Only when we inquire into prescribed role patterns and actual behavior, into the differences between what was expected of men and of women, will we gain a glimpse into what may have inspired and motivated these anchoresses. Then we will also discover the impact these women had on the “histoire vécue du peuple chrétien” or “lived *Christianitas*,” as a programmatic French study phrased it, the “religion vécue” or “lived religion” as distinct from the institutional Church.²⁰ Finally, there remains the intriguing question of why historians have paid so little attention to this phenomenon. If it was as widespread as I suggest here, why was it never a likely object of study by church historians or religious scholars?

I intend to give a face and a story to the many anonymous recluses by presenting five examples of anchoresses about whom we happen to have a more or less detailed life account. All five of them lived in the

twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the lowlands of northwest Europe, in the cultural region, that is, between the Seine and the Elbe. I chose this period and this region because the new type of the free urban anchoress was emerging there at the time and because the lives of these few women illustrate the historical significance of their ideal. Let me introduce them.

Five Exemplary Women

The mother of Guibert of Nogent (d. after 1104) is my first witness.²¹ Portrayed by her son as an energetic and self-confident, even dominating woman, she withdrew as a widow into an anchorhold at what seems to have been a family monastery. She took half of her family and household with her: two sons, both of her chaplains, her resident tutor, and other household staff were urged to enter the contemplative life in the nearby abbey itself. Clearly, this was not an attempt to find total solitude. Nor was she ever, as far as we know, formally enclosed. In her cell she was visited by men and women from her previous circle, the higher nobility of northern France, who now came to speak with her about matters of faith. “Restrained and at the same time eloquent” as she was, it seemed to the visitors that they heard the bishop himself speaking.

Yvette of Huy (1158–1228), a member of the social upper crust of this old trading town on the Meuse, also a widow and mother of two sons, initially tried to live a religious life from her own house. When this proved impossible, she withdrew to a leper colony on the river and ten years later had herself enclosed at the chapel there. The abbot of Orval conducted the ceremony. From her anchorhold she offered guidance to pious visitors from the city and directed a group of devout men and women who together formed one of the earliest beguine communities. She summoned priests and even the dean of the main church to her presence and confronted them about their behavior. She read the minds of these faithful, imagined what they had done, and sensed what would happen in the future. In the uncertain period of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, when the Christian faith actually began to penetrate everyday life, she served as a moral beacon for the faithful in the town. People recognized her as a prophetess. When Yvette died in the middle of a cold winter, the little birds at her window sang a summer song. They realized that in her cell paradise had been regained.

Juliana of Cornillon (1192–1258) and Eve of St. Martin in Liège (d. after 1264), my third and fourth witnesses respectively, formed a teacher-pupil team that had a far-reaching influence on the universal Church. Originator of the Feast of Corpus Christi, Juliana, who was prioress of a lepers' convent near Liège (she too), composed with the assistance of a young clerk a Latin office for the feast and its octave. Together with Eve she campaigned vigorously for its introduction. Both showed themselves to be theologians of stature who could hold their own in discussions with the great Church reformers. Around 1248, when Juliana's attempts to force the young sisters to adopt her own ascetic way of life set her at odds with her convent, she gave up her campaign for a new feast and withdrew into the reclusive life. She was not officially enclosed, however.

Eve, in contrast, who already as a young woman had been ritually enclosed at the chapter church of St. Martin, continued the struggle and, in 1264, a few years after Juliana's death, saw her efforts rewarded with the universal introduction of the feast day by the pope. This was Urban IV, who in his younger years had been archdeacon in Liège and apparently a personal friend of Juliana and Eve. The pope honored the old recluse by personally sending her a solemn papal bull informing her of the institution of the new feast—an exceptional mark of honor for an individual believer and a woman.

Lame Margaret of Magdeburg (ca. 1210–50) is my last example. Enclosed as a girl of twelve *quasi in platea*, “in the street,” as it were, she saw it as her first task to counsel visitors. Her confessor, John, a Dominican, was highly critical of this, if only because the girl let herself be tempted into making less than orthodox statements. He therefore removed her from her cell with the permission of the bishop and placed her in the seclusion of a Dominican convent. Margaret kept protesting against this confinement until she again obtained a cell that gave her contact with visitors. There she “summoned notorious sinners to her presence and worked tirelessly for them.” She comforted them, interceded for them with Christ and his Mother, and taught them the basic tenets of the Christian faith. Her critics sneered that she merely gathered scraps of second-hand information from here and there and presented them as her own wisdom. This was probably not far from the truth. Margaret very likely pondered in her heart the things she had heard and allowed them free play in her mind during meditation. These images then returned later in dreams and visionary conversations with Christ as “inspirations” or “insights.” Her Latin *vita*

is indeed full of formulas and short lists of memorabilia that believers could learn by heart. I infer from this that Margaret, having learned these things herself from the Dominicans and other learned visitors, taught them in turn to the faithful in the town. She was the religious instructor, the catechist for the people of Magdeburg. Margaret herself believed that she had received her knowledge from Mary.

A New Ideal

IN THE NEW CITIES

These five women were deeply rooted in the religious culture of the later Middle Ages. In this period, during the first flowering of what is now called Western civilization, women in the economic centers of northwest Europe seized the opportunity to shape their faith more in keeping with their own insights. The free anchoritic life was one of the remarkable results of this development.

In the new cities of Italy and especially in the lowlands of northern Europe, ordinary city dwellers who had achieved material comfort and social esteem through personal initiative and an enterprising spirit developed new and appealing forms of religious practice. Uninspired by the older, existing forms, they were open to new ideals and demanded personal involvement. Their faith acquired an ethical and moral dimension. Women, who in the old family structures had always been in charge of religious duties, eagerly seized their chance. For the first time in Western history large groups of women made religion the focus of their lives. They followed itinerant preachers, lived together in convents—some of which sought affiliation with the new monastic orders—and from the thirteenth century onward went by the hundreds to live in beguine convents and beguinages. There were also women who went from door to door praying and begging, who cared for the sick and the lepers, and who met to discuss the Bible and the basic tenets of the Christian faith. A sizable number had themselves enclosed as anchoresses near a parish church or city chapel.

Until recently historians, including historians of culture and religion, showed little interest in this lay movement as an independent development. They simply followed the lead of church historians, who reasoned back from modern dogmas and were interested mainly in the evolution of

their own order or confession. And traditions of nineteenth-century historical scholarship, in which the development of political (that is, public) institutions was the measure of all things, continued to set the tone. Attention was therefore focused mainly on new institutions and new dogmas hammered out within the ecclesiastical apparatus. To the extent that the cities did enter the picture, the new forms of life and new devotions emerging there were viewed as having trickled down from initiatives at the top. Consequently those earlier scholars interpreted something like the *vita apostolica*, the widespread ideal of the “apostolic way of life,” in a monastic sense: as a life in poverty and community in imitation of the apostles in Acts 2. They failed to discover what the lay faithful meant by this, namely a life of preaching and apostleship for themselves.²² The innovations were viewed as part of a comprehensive master plan known as the Gregorian Reform, a blueprint developed by the pope and the curia and imposed from above whenever the opportunity presented itself—by Gregory VII himself, of course (1067–85), by the synods of the twelfth century, and by Innocent III (1198–1215) with his Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. No mention was made of any grass-roots impetus. The idea that the innovations resulted from a process of ferment at all levels hardly came up for consideration.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, were primarily a time of inner Christianization among ordinary believers, a period in which the personal experience of the Christian faith first penetrated everyday life. The institution of the Church, with its new pretensions of priestly authority and the ministry of sacraments, had to claim a place for itself in this process as much as the new forms of religious experience. Respect for the priesthood and the papacy could not be taken for granted, especially considering that many priests hardly deserved (moral) authority. The sacraments of the Church began to acquire their crucial significance as means of grace necessary for salvation only after the Lateran Council. And only then did the fear of hell and damnation become widespread. Because the Church did not yet have sanctions to force the faithful into obedience, it was dependent on the persuasive powers of its servants. In a climate of this kind, charismatically inclined believers, especially women, had as much of a chance to profile themselves as the often poorly qualified priests. Church reformers also relied on their support.

The new devout of this time experienced their faith in the parish church, the heart of the community and focal point of their new identity. They did not seek out the seclusion of a monastery or the interiority of

personal devotion: the “art of devotion” was a product of the late Middle Ages.²³ For believers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries faith was a communal affair, experienced in the framework of the parish, neighborhood, or town. Within that communal setting, attempts were made to mold religious practice along more personal lines, with an increasing emphasis on issues of morality and ethics. Talented and ambitious women were in the forefront of these developments. Recluses living in the heart of the community, whose identity all but merged with that of the parish church, were the trendsetters. We can hardly overestimate the importance of these innovations. Arnold Angenendt speaks of a watershed in the history of Christianity.²⁴

The most remarkable of these innovations was the free reclusive form of life for women. Living as ascetics in the world but not of the world, they totally surrendered themselves to the love of God without submitting to a fixed rule or an imposed form of life. This freedom meant that they could choose a residence outside the confines of this world, at a place where heaven and earth intersected in the sacred space of the church, a small corner of paradise on earth where even nature had regained its original freedom. About Christina the Astonishing, an anchoress at the beginning of the thirteenth century, a Middle Dutch poet wrote:

Where God’s Spirit is, one can be free.
That is why she flew effortlessly
With her body straight through the air,
Just like a bird that had no fear.²⁵

Living in their anchorholds in the midst of their fellow citizens, anchoresses did not lead the isolated existence that Roman Catholic theologians and church historians imagined. They were not penitents who spent their days in total solitude, wallowing in extreme forms of self-castigation. Nor were they loners primarily concerned with their own sanctity, a wishful image of Church reformers. They were neither an “overflow” from convents nor an adjunct of monastic reforms.²⁶ Instead, they were strong, self-assured believers who chose to live at the heart of the community and to serve God in a way that included service to their fellow human beings. Often members of the upper social classes and blessed with a seemingly innate spirit of independence, they dedicated themselves to God without turning away from the world. Unburdened by social obligations, they were free to act as the spirit, the Spirit, moved them. This

meant listening to people; instructing them if they lacked knowledge; hearing their confessions; helping them find answers to questions of life and death. But it also meant taking authoritative action against those who behaved immorally.

Although male believers could also pursue this ideal, and a few actually did so, it was mainly a women's affair. And it was an urban phenomenon.²⁷ Persons who sought physical quiet and contemplation entered a monastery in the countryside; recluses remained in the town. Men could build a hermitage in the forest, a possibility unimaginable for women. Male believers with a penchant for contemplation were attracted to the new eremitic orders like Camaldoli or the Carthusians. If they felt called to a God-centered life in the service of the community, they opted for the priesthood or the new mendicant orders. Women with a calling of this kind had no choice other than the reclusive life.

Unlike nuns, especially those in the new orders, recluses did not cut all their ties to society. The pressure to enter the cloistered life, to which nuns yielded, they kept resisting—some of them, like Lame Margaret, with great stubbornness. As part of the social upper crust, they certainly could have entered a convent, but they chose not to do so. A protected life on the grounds of an abbey was not enough for them, not even for the widows among them such as the mother of Guibert and Yvette. In contrast to secular canonesses, these women did opt for strict asceticism. Even though recluses are often mentioned in the same breath with beguines, their life was dedicated to God in a much more drastic and demanding way. Their stance toward the world—forsaking but not avoiding it—was an essential distinguishing feature. It is worth noting here that in beguine circles enclosure as an anchoress was at times considered the ultimate ideal. In the beguinage of 's-Hertogenbosch it was the "task" of one of the beguines to be enclosed in the community's own cell.²⁸

The anchoritic existence actually approached that of a parish priest. Like priests, recluses distinguished themselves from ordinary believers by a recognizable way of life, in the one case marked by celibacy and a cassock and in the other by a cell and a gray habit. For both of them, dedicating themselves to God included serving their fellow human beings. Both underwent a solemn ritual that confirmed their choice of life. The ordination of the priest into the Church, it is true, was defined in canon law in fundamentally different terms from that of the benediction of a recluse. But unlike the priest, the father (*pater*) of the community of believers, who was present in the church only when the services required

him to be, the anchoress (*mater*) actually lived in the church. Present day and night, she was like a mother, always at home.

NO NUNS, NO RULE, NO STATUS

This free anchoritic life of laypersons should not be confused with what I call the “honors class” of monks and nuns. In the early Middle Ages the reclusive life was viewed mainly as a stricter form of asceticism for members of established orders. In organizational terms, it was a monastic affair, that belonged in a rural society. The abbot granted permission for reclusion and conducted the enclosure ceremony.²⁹ The monk or nun continued to follow the familiar rule in the cell. The rare laypersons who had themselves enclosed at an abbey were automatically adopted into the monastic family.

With the religious renewal in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, city dwellers also felt attracted to the anchoritic lifestyle; they had themselves enclosed at parish churches and chapels in the city, thus fundamentally changing the nature of the institution. These were not monks and nuns who wanted to avoid all contact with their fellow human beings but ordinary townspeople who wished to dedicate themselves to God in their own surroundings. These believers sought to free themselves from the entanglements of family and society as Jesus did, but not to turn their backs on society as such. For these new recluses the traditional rules were clearly no longer suitable. They had neither a monastic rule by which to live nor an abbot to give them pastoral guidance. Nor did they want such things. We now see an appeal being made to the bishop, as head of the secular community of believers, to take these recluses under his wing. In 1202 the diocesan synod in Liège adopted a canon introduced by the papal legate Guido of Preneste, stating that a postulant could be enclosed only after receiving permission of the bishop.³⁰ Toward the middle of the century the bishop of Liège even appointed a special *visitor* for beguines, beghards, and recluses, the renowned Renier of Tongeren, great admirer of female spirituality and promoter of women’s religious interests.³¹

Since existing monastic rules and vows did not as a matter of course apply to urban recluses, they were not required to give up their possessions. Many lived on their own income or property, others were supported by the local parish, and some, as we know from English anchorites, received

bequests and possibly gifts in kind from the faithful. Under the supervision of bishops, the life of recluses, like that of beguines, became increasingly regulated as an institution in its own right.

It was not self-evident that the new recluses had to follow a rule. In view of the prominent place now occupied by *Ancrene Wisse* in English literary history, this requires some explanation. Before the end of the Middle Ages, when the anchoritic life was actually institutionalized, we find little that resembles a rule in the strict sense of a regimen for daily life. Recluses were simply free religious, unbound by rules. They no doubt drew inspiration from general tracts for the spiritual life, such as the famous *Golden Letter* by William of St. Thierry.³² Juliana of Cornillon and Eve of St. Martin, for example, appear to have been familiar with this work. The English *Ancrene Wisse* also bears more resemblance to a spiritual guide than to a rule. And the actual readers it had in mind were members of a small community, not individually enclosed anchoresses.³³

By no means did all anchoresses have themselves formally enclosed. Frequently a believer would reside in a cell during a specific phase of her life, in some cases at the beginning of an ecclesiastical career, evidently to gain recognition, but more often as its culmination, as in the case of Yvette of Huy. After some time such a person could request official permission from the bishop and undergo a ritual enclosure. This was a separate step that a good many anchoresses never took. Official enclosure did not in any case mean that the anchoress received holy orders or a monastic status; it was not some sort of ordination. Yet, once enclosed, anchoresses were held in high esteem. In contrast to beguines and free-roaming religious women, they in fact gave little cause for suspicion and distrust. The whole parish could keep an eye on a recluse, situated as she was in the heart of the community, visible to all. No one but a saint could persevere in that life of strict asceticism.

Free recluses were rooted in incarnation theology, a faith based on the incarnation of God and on his intervention in human history. With its focus on God the Son granting eternal life to believers, it was a strongly future-oriented faith. Because Mary was the one who had made the incarnation possible, she was as much a mediator as God-Christ himself and would retain that function until the end of time. Mary was therefore the focus of their devotion. Through the incarnation of his wisdom in Christ, God had revealed himself directly to individual believers. They were consequently able to enter an intimate relationship with the divine,

independent of priestly mediation. Again, Mary served as a go-between, and her maidservants on earth, the anchoresses, followed in her footsteps. Like Mary, the recluse was viewed as a *mater*, a spiritual mother.

The recluses therefore responded to the growing desire among city dwellers for a more personal faith, for an individual bond with Christ and his Mother.³⁴ Regularly anchoresses functioned as go-betweens for the common faithful and the Church authorities. With in many cases a solid education behind them and nurtured by divine visions and inspirations, they could articulate the feelings and needs of the community of believers and enter into discussion with Church leaders on an equal footing. Some of them, like Juliana and Eve, were able to come up with theological ideas of their own. They were “practical theologians” and bridge builders. I have therefore chosen to call them “common theologians,” and I distinguish them from the learned Latin theologians of their day. Common theology stands in the same relation to learned theology as common law to learned (Roman) law. And just as common law was often not written down but did have general validity, common theology was not always written but could be generally accepted as well in their day. The domain in which common theology operated was that of the lived *Christianitas* (“religion vécue”) and the “public orality.”³⁵

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE *DEO SACRATAE*

Among the new believers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the women especially found informal ways of life more appealing than monastic institutions. Models and prototypes are therefore more likely to be found among the unaffiliated God-consecrated women from earlier periods than in established forms of eremitism or monasticism.³⁶ Recluses drew their inspiration from traditions such as those of vowesses and the female diaconate.

From the first centuries of Christendom, women, both rich matrons and widows, had been active in organizing and disseminating the faith. They received fellow believers into their homes, broke bread with them, and discussed the faith. Widows among them spoke out in public. In the New Testament the old widow and prophetess Anna witnessed the circumcision of Christ and “spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2: 38). Paul confirmed the special position of such women (Titus 2: 2–5). In his Epistle to the Romans he mentioned

Phoebe, “a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea,” a suburb of Corinth. “A servant” he called her, the Greek word is *diakonos*, the deaconess. The Vulgate renders this as *quae est in ministerio ecclesiae*.³⁷ A thousand years later, Thomas of Cantimpré, a friend of recluses and pious women, would use the same term for the public function, the *ministerium*, of the anchoress Christina the Astonishing.³⁸

In subsequent centuries the diaconal function evolved into an official Church office. It eventually eclipsed other forms of women’s service, such as that of virgins, widows, and prophetesses. The fourth-century *Constitutiones Apostolorum* even ascribed to deaconesses a rank in the Church order equal to that of male deacons, including a liturgical ordination. The liturgy included the following prayer by the priest: “Eternal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of man and woman, Thou who filled Miriam with the Holy Spirit, and Deborah, Anna, and Hulda, Thou who didst not consider it unworthy for thy only begotten Son to be born of a woman . . . bestow on this woman now the Holy Spirit.”³⁹ The names of these Old Testament foremothers of the deaconess and of Mary, the prophetess of the New Testament, would be used in the West to define the medieval prophetess—as would the close tie with the Holy Spirit. In the *Constitutiones* the deaconess was viewed as the earthly representative of the Holy Spirit, without whose instruction no one could come to believe in Christ. The deaconess functioned as an intermediary between female believers and the male clergy.⁴⁰ I wish to argue that the medieval prophetess, especially in the person of the urban recluse, took on this role of diaconal mediator, that she followed in her footsteps, even though she had to do without the official liturgical confirmation.

The position of women in the early Church can be summarized in the words of Jo Ann McNamara: “The church offered aristocratic women opportunities for influence, intellectual engagement, social service, and experiments in lifestyle as episcopal partisans. Extrasacramental liturgies and devotions attracted their attention. . . . This type of public display gave them a quasi-clerical place in the church order.”⁴¹ For reasons to be discussed later, however, there was no future for deaconesses in the Latin Church.⁴² In the new kingdoms of the Goths, Franks, and Saxons, developments took a different turn. Priests and priestesses traditionally had their own tasks in the heathen cults, priestesses in predicting the future, for example, and assisting with cultic activities. After the conversion to Christianity, Christian princesses and aristocratic women, active as they were in the organization of the Church, took over some of these old

tasks. Most of those who did so were virgins or widows. They functioned as *ministrae* who fulfilled important functions alongside the male priest in both religious services and the pastorate. Some even played a quasi-priestly role. In rare cases, like those of the Merovingian queen and aspiring saint Radegunde and the daughter of Bishop Remigius of Reims, they were rewarded for this with ordination as deaconess. Most, however, tried to achieve the same result by other means, such as the ceremonial bestowal of a virgin's or widow's veil, sealed with the blessing of the bishop.⁴³

The sources make it clear that consecrated women like these, *Deo sacratae*, were active everywhere, either individually or in small home conventicles. Western Europe had a *Famula Dei*, comparable to Peter Brown's "Holy Man" in the East. In Anglo-Saxon England there was the professed widow known as a *nunne*, a derivative of the Latin *nonna*, or grandmother, the female counterpart of the secular priest. In the liturgical formulation of her function we again find an allusion to the prophetess Anna.⁴⁴ The Continent had its consecrated virgins, such as Genoveva of Paris, and a whole series of widows-deaconesses. In the ninth century, with the increasing penetration of the lay world into Church law, the liturgy for the ordination of deaconesses was once again included in the handbooks. An intriguing point here is that a deaconess could not be ordained before her fortieth year.⁴⁵ The age of forty seems to have been a generally recognized caesura. It very likely had this marker function for recluses as well: only at a ripe age was it acceptable for these women to play a role in society—witness the mother of Guibert, Yvette of Huy, and even Juliana of Cornillon. From glosses added to the ninth-century canons, ordination as a deaconess appears to have been a matter of great esteem and was also used for purposes other than the classical diaconate. At the Council of Paris (829) the bishops noted: "Certain women, under the pretext of taking the veil, without the consent of bishops, are veiling themselves so that they can become the female guardians, *excubatrices*, and female managers, *administratrices*, of churches." Other deaconesses took possession of a convent as lay abbesses. The ordination as vowess or deaconess evidently sanctioned the near-clerical, even quasi-priestly function, which some prominent women actually fulfilled.⁴⁶ The mother of Guibert would fall back on this tradition. After the Gregorian Reform, however, the ordination of deaconesses could no longer be defended. New roles and functions then had to be invented that were less obviously at odds with the new Church law.

Historians, accustomed as they are to clearly defined institutions and

the study of legal documentation, have until recently shown little interest in women of this kind. To them they seem a group of disparate individuals, truly “bees without a king.” But scholarship of recent years has yielded some groundbreaking studies on which this book builds. The question raised here is whether, and in what way, aristocratic women of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were inspired by images and forms from preceding centuries. A related question is whether and how Church leaders used these traditions from the past to determine the position of such women. We shall discover that the charisma of the prophetess came to eclipse the office of deaconess. Anna remained the prototype of the vowess and prophetess; Old Testament prophetesses and Mary from the New Testament also retained their legitimizing character. Allusions were made to an ongoing prophetic succession. From the safety of their anchorhold, women of a ripe age assumed a function in the community of the faithful that included elements of the office of deaconess. The enclosure ritual of the anchoress thus took the place of the abrogated deaconess ordination, a change that entailed the loss of an official liturgy but at the same time the gain of a new dimension.

A HISTORY FROM BELOW

In the period following the Gregorian Reform, prelates interested in further reforming the Church became progressively less willing to accept a lay apostolate and noninstitutionalized forms of religious life. By defining their own “corps ecclésiastique” as a separate entity, the *sacerdotium*, with its own rights and its own restrictions such as celibacy, and with monopolistic claims to preaching, pastoral care, and confession, they denied the faithful the right to exercise sacerdotal functions. Only an ordained priest would be allowed to administer the sacraments, to preach, or to hear confession; only he was considered an intermediary between God and man. An unordained and therefore “lay” person, no matter how divinely gifted, had to abstain from such activities. In the thinking of Church reformers, there had to be a strict separation between ministers of salvation, the ordained clergy, on the one hand and recipients of that salvation, the simple faithful, on the other.⁴⁷ If ordinary believers wanted to devote themselves full-time to religion, they were supposed to withdraw into the contemplative life and commit themselves, for example, to seven-year periods of fasting and prayer.⁴⁸

The first preference of the Church was to have women enter one of the monastic orders. These had, in a sense, been specially created for the purpose and offered an organizational framework that could easily be controlled by the clergy. Many women did, in fact, follow this advice, including some prominent *mulieres religiosas* from Brabant and Liège, who entered Cistercian and Premonstratensian convents. “Many a bold leap toward heaven ended behind the walls of a convent,” Arno Borst notes with an undertone of sarcasm. But there remained a substantial group unwilling to take this step.⁴⁹

These ideals of the Gregorian Reform were claims formulated by an ecclesiastical vanguard and propagated by Church reformers, papal legates in particular. They were not necessarily, and certainly not from the outset, shared by the entire clergy, nor taken for granted by the ordinary community of the faithful. One problem was that everyone, including the Church reformers and the theologians, believed that God’s spirit blew where it wished, even upon charismatic laypersons. “Inspired” individuals of this kind could proclaim salvation to their fellow believers by appealing to the Holy Spirit. There remained, in short, a free zone, a certain leeway for interaction on the “shop floor.” Moreover, the ordinary clergy was by no means equal to its newly assigned task—a situation that encouraged laypersons to step in and fill the lacunae. A seminal study by John Van Engen postulates that the local parishes played a pivotal role in shaping the Church.⁵⁰ What took place there, to quote John Skinner, was “a constant and lively interplay of devotional ideas and practices between clergy and laity, high and low.”⁵¹ Parishes formed the arena where Church reformers and religious laypersons, theologians and “common theologians,” interacted. They were the laboratory for experiments in lay leadership. The anchoritic culture of the Middle Ages, I intend to show, was both a result of that parochial interaction and a form in which it flourished.

The Research

In order to gain insight into the expansion of anchoritism in my period of research, I have collected as much testimony as possible relating to recluses and anchorites. Whereas in the early Middle Ages, beginning in Merovingian and Carolingian times, believers showed a preference for a hermitage in the wilderness, in the twelfth century the balance swung in favor of the *recluserium*.⁵² This shift was caused by the unprecedented

popularity of the reclusive life among women and the simultaneous decline in enthusiasm among men. For the period 1100 to 1300 I have the names of more than two hundred recluses. Only five of these were men—and they, in my view, were stragglers from the preceding monastic period. Until the thirteenth century recluses almost without exception lived south of the rivers Rhine and Meuse. In succeeding centuries the phenomenon also penetrated the diocese of Utrecht and northern Germany on a large scale but did not undergo any substantial changes. These two hundred recluses make up the background choir for my soloists, the mother of Guibert of Nogent, Yvette of Huy, Juliana and Eve of Liège, and Lame Margaret of Magdeburg.

THE LOWLANDS BETWEEN THE SEINE AND THE ELBE IN THE
TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

As noted above, institutional Christendom, and especially the role of the priesthood in the Church, had not yet fully crystallized in the years following the Gregorian Reform and the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. *Sacerdotium* and *laicatus*, the priestly and the lay state, were still open to interpretation; negotiation was possible. One of the important points of negotiation, in my view, was the anchoritic state. While this may not have been true for the entire Church, it did apply to the self-assured lay world of the cities of northwestern Europe. This calls for a demarcation of the religious and cultural region and of the period in which these negotiations took place. Around 1250 the “foreigner” Lamprecht von Regensburg wrote:

That art [of Love and Contemplating God] has in our day
Arisen among women
In Brabant and Bavarian lands.
Lord God, what art is this
That an old woman understands
Better than a clever man?⁵³

Brabant and Liège, the heart of the new women’s devotion, will therefore form the core of this study. But how should the area be further defined? Another contemporary, Hadewych, who lived at the center of the new piety, left us an account of the religious movement of her day and its most

prominent figures. She drew up a list of “perfect” persons, one hundred thirty-eight men and women whom she considered models of the perfect love of God. An analysis of this list shows that most of Hadewych’s examples are drawn from the area between Paris (she knew a young anchorite living there) and Saxony (home of the anchoress Mina). This provides the perfect demarcation for my research area: geographically, from Paris to Magdeburg in Saxony; and thematically, individual faithful who sought the seclusion of an anchorhold.⁵⁴

This religiously defined area coincides with the region that began acquiring political and cultural cohesion in Carolingian times. Around the home territory of the Carolingian dynasty near Liège, the tribal lands of the Franks (the Carolingians themselves) and the subjugated Frisians and Saxons grew together into a recognizable cultural-religious region, with a political center in Lower Lotharingia.⁵⁵ Its southern border ran north of Paris, where Flanders was kept at bay by the French king, and along the southern edge of the prince-bishopric of Liège; in the east its outer limit was marked by the Elbe, the dividing line between the Germanic and Slavonic peoples; and in the north and west it bordered on the sea. The aristocracy in this region was predominantly oriented toward the Holy Roman Empire. Despite close ties with the Church, it maintained a large degree of independence. “C’est plus qu’ailleurs, un monde unique où dominant l’esprit de parenté, le privilège de caste, le sens de la hiérarchie, de l’honneur, du lignage.”⁵⁶

In contrast to southern Europe, individual family members in this area, particularly the male head of the household and his wife, played a relatively independent role. Matrons and widows here also appear to have had more control over their own affairs and greater freedom of movement than elsewhere. Unmarried sisters and other female family members of the emperor, who formed a kind of “celestial court” in imperial monasteries, were even sent on diplomatic missions.⁵⁷ Their intellectual level was in some cases surprisingly high. Peter Biller points out “that ordinary women in parts of north-western Europe were to quite a large degree excluded from literacy, but that this ‘degree’ was significantly milder than the brutal extensiveness of the exclusion in southern Europe.”⁵⁸

From a religious perspective this area is a case apart. It showed a disproportionate number of new initiatives in religious communities. Some of the new religious orders germinated here. It was the venue of the Eucharist controversy, which will come up for detailed discussion in the chapter on Juliana of Cornillon, and the cradle of Trinity veneration and

Eucharist devotion. It also formed the heartland of the peculiar form of lay piety that prized visual representations, images, and holy places.⁵⁹ And last but not least, it was home to the lay movements—the spontaneous hermits and *Wanderprediger* with their followings, the beguines and beg-hards, and in the late Middle Ages the men and women of the Modern Devotion.

The temporal scope of this study falls naturally between 1100, when the budding of the new culture and economy and the accompanying religious awareness were first becoming visible, and 1311, when ecclesiastical policies adopted at the Council of Vienne created a completely new framework. The main focus is the thirteenth century, the period in which the new achievements acquired a permanent form.

THE PLAN OF THIS BOOK

In each of the biographical chapters I devote special attention to broader issues that arise in connection with the life and work of that recluse. The first of these appears in Chapter 2, on the mother of Guibert of Nogent. It concerns the role of recluses in the oral circuit of the Middle Ages and the contribution of wise old women to the transmission of knowledge and religious instruction in the community of believers. Chapter 3, on Yvette of Huy, discusses the possibilities for growth and change open to women in various stages of their lives. Questions regarding the contributions of religious women to theological discussions and their significance for the Church and its liturgy provide the backdrop for Chapters 4 and 5, on Juliana of Cornillon and Eve of St. Martin respectively. And Chapter 6, a portrayal of Margaret the Lame of Magdeburg, explores the anchor-ess's role as religious instructor of the faithful.

In the extensive concluding chapter, "Living saints," I draw some general conclusions about the public role and significance of anchoritism in the lowlands of northwest Europe. The free reclusive life is given a place in the general history of eremitism. The focal point here is the Mother of God, *Maria Doctrinx*, source of wisdom and mother of prophet-esses. In an Epilogue I draw a few connecting lines to the institutionalized anchoritism of the late Middle Ages. The closing section is devoted to Sister Bertke (d. 1514), the most famous of all anchoresses from the Netherlands. She is living proof that the old ideals of a life devoted to both God and humanity were still very much alive on the eve of the Reformation.

The Mother of Guibert of Nogent

The Age of Discretion

IN THE COUNTRYSIDE of northern France at the beginning of the twelfth century lived the nobleman Guibert, abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Nogent (ca. 1055–ca. 1125). He gained fame through his unconventional writings, including the highly autobiographical *Monodiae*, otherwise known as *De vita sua*. In this work he devoted unusual attention to the life of his mother; actually, Guibert's mother is as much the leading character of his account as Guibert himself. She was for her son the type of God-fearing woman who provided a sharp contrast to his own uphill struggles with the spiritual life. Since his mother gave shape to her religious ideals in an anchorhold, we have in her life one of the earliest testimonies of the new reclusive lifestyle in the lowlands between the Seine and the Elbe. Her way of living, which she pursued more or less experimentally, would in subsequent centuries gain great popularity and evolve into an acknowledged form of religious life. Guibert's account therefore offers not only a fascinating family history but also an unexpected glimpse into the motives, function, and significance of female anchoritism in that beginning phase, the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.¹

Biography

A LADY OF THE HOUSE

Born into the milieu of northern European nobility, probably around 1030, Guibert's mother entered the scene at just the right place and the right moment to try out new ideals. Her home area would prove fertile ground for a wide range of religious initiatives; and it was during her lifetime, the second half of the eleventh and first decade of the twelfth century,

that the general Reform movement reached this region. Guibert shows in his autobiography how the aristocracy of his day took an active part in this process. He writes admiringly about Theobald of Champagne, who chose to live as a charcoal burner in the forest, and about his uncle Evrard, who converted to the life of a hermit knight and subsequently entered the famous abbey of Marmoutier. He writes about the great monastic reformers, about Bruno of Cologne, who founded the Carthusian order, and Simon of Valois, who led a peripatetic life as a lay preacher.² He also describes the enthusiasm of noble ladies, although he had few "heroic deeds" to report about them. They gave up their possessions and withdrew to a convent. Or they bestowed "surrounding churches and altars with abundant and welcome offerings and [made] it their aim to equal the prayers and the pious way of life which they could not follow themselves by imitating these people [the hermits and lay preachers] and by helping with their possessions—as far as they could—to make that way of life possible."³ We can imagine that some energetic women wanted something more spectacular.

There were no early indications, however, that the mother would blaze a new trail. She began her adult life like any other girl from the upper classes. Married by parental arrangement at an early age, she dutifully accepted all that this entailed: seven childless years; an unfaithful husband; in-laws who wanted to be rid of her. Looking back from our vantage point, we can imagine that this yielded her a good deal of life experience and insight into human nature. And very likely the firm conviction that she would not want to go through it all over again if she were ever faced with the choice. Perhaps she found time for reading and study in those years, for she later gave evidence of being quite well-read.

After those seven unfortunate years she gave birth to at least three sons who reached adulthood. If she was twelve or thirteen years old at the time of her marriage, she must have had her children between the ages of twenty and thirty. These were in fact the years in which medieval women were physically mature and fertile. Actually, her in-laws had little reason to complain. Guibert tells how the birth of the last child, himself, was so difficult that the infant was promised to Mary if born in good health. Our Lady, "who rules Earth and Heaven after thy only Son," was the mother's only support during these trying times.⁴ Mary could be relied on, while experience had shown that family and friends could not. These were anxious years nevertheless. When her husband became a prisoner of war (1054), her panic was so great that she felt overpowered by the devil in the

night, nearly suffocating under his weight. Once again it was Mary who rescued her. According to Guibert, Mary gave her the willpower and the self-confidence to conduct her life in keeping with the demands of the times. To judge from his account, it is hardly surprising that she opted for another form of life as soon as the opportunity presented itself.

Widowed shortly after the birth of Guibert, the mother refused to remarry despite the repeated urgings and outright intimidation of her in-laws. Guibert relates that her husband's relatives tried to force her to give up her children and family possessions. She managed to prevent this by taking refuge in the church.⁵ They then tried to force her to remarry. This she prevented as well, perhaps with the help of the bishop of Beauvais, who regularly came to her aid. Although we now know that women of the upper nobility had more leeway to shape their own lives at this time than was long assumed, their choices were still very limited.⁶ Be this as it may, the mother succeeded in managing the family property and raising Guibert and his older brothers. In her free moments she worked at her religious education in the ways open to a woman from her circles. She found a good house tutor for her youngest son, an enthusiastic man who would also become her own spiritual guide. She held deep conversations with him, which gave rise to some jealousy in Guibert.⁷ She had her chaplains read night offices, said many prayers, and gave alms.⁸ Under her luxurious gowns she wore a hair shirt—Guibert had felt it himself as a young boy.⁹ She probably prayed the Psalter, perhaps read treatises of the Church Fathers or had them read to her, and possibly studied the Bible as well. Guibert says none of this explicitly but at one point mentions in passing that she followed "her Gregory, whom she however had never read or heard read."¹⁰ It was probably more a pious wish that guided his pen here than factual observation of his mother's reading habits.

Enhancing the religious level of her personal life was all that she could aspire to in those years. This changed when she was about forty years old. When the youngest son, Guibert himself, was twelve years old—and thus adult, according to the criteria of the time—his mother obeyed the promptings of her heart and entered a cell that she had commissioned at the abbey church of St. Germer-de-Fly (ca. 1067).¹¹ This was a male institution in what was probably her home area, and it may have functioned as a kind of family monastery. The old abbot, Hugh I, had grown up at her father's court, she herself had brought up the young abbot John, and now she took half of her family and household with her. She secured a place in the abbey for her son Guibert as well as one of his

older brothers, two chaplains, and the house tutor—domestic staff who could in this way simply continue to serve Guibert and his mother.¹² The point was obviously not to be totally cut off from family and society. Guibert describes her entry as follows:

Coming to the cloister, she found an old woman in the habit of a nun whom she compelled to live with her, declaring that she would submit to her discipline, as she gave the appearance of great piety. . . . She began gradually to copy the severity of the older woman, to imitate her meager diet, to choose the plainest food, to give up the soft mattress to which she had been accustomed, to sleep in contentment with only straw and a sheet. And since she still had much beauty and showed no sign of age, she purposely strove to assume the appearance of age with an old woman's wrinkles and bowed form. Her long flowing locks . . . were frequently cut short with the scissors; her dress was black and unpleasant-looking, its unfashionable width adorned with countless patches . . . for there was within her One whom she tried to please with such apparel.¹³

By imitating everything about the old woman, the mother molded herself into a religious person. She copied the woman's external behavior and learned the Psalms from her—not by reading them herself, Guibert emphasizes, but by listening, *non videndo sed audiendo*.¹⁴ She meditated on them day and night, ruminating on the words until she had absorbed all the nourishment they had to offer. The term that Guibert employs here, *ruminatio*, was typically used to denote the study and meditation of monks. In the manner of monks the mother developed into a wise old woman whose conversation was valued by countless visitors.

The impression created by Guibert's sketch is that she became in every respect a genuine, holy anchoress. She had dreams and visions, which allowed her to take stock of her past and present. She saw her deceased husband, for example, doing penance for the fact that he had an illegitimate child. She developed the gift of discretion and was able to read the thoughts of the people who came to her—especially the thoughts of her own son. She possessed the gift of foreseeing the future.¹⁵ She in fact developed into a medieval prophetess. One of the mother's visions was a dream in which she saw herself imitating Mary in the same way that she had imitated the old woman. In her dream she saw Mary stride toward the altar of the abbey church and kneel down there in prayer; she then realized that she was doing exactly the same thing herself. She also heard Mary address her son—who was planning to leave the abbey where his mother lived and where he had entered the monastic life—and heard herself literally repeating her words. I paraphrase:

A woman of beauty and majesty beyond measure strode up the middle aisle of the church to the altar, followed by a young woman whose appearance and deference suited her exactly. She walked up to the altar and knelt in prayer. The woman following her, her noble attendant, did the same behind her. Mary then turned and . . . let her gaze fall on me [Guibert] . . . saying, "I brought him here and made him a monk. By no means will I permit him to be taken away." These same words were then repeated in like fashion by the servant.¹⁶

In her function as Mary's assistant she delivered the message to Guibert, who then decided not to go through with his plan.

Guibert remained in St. Germer and received his further education in the monastery. Unlike his mother, he busied himself with books day and night, studying Latin and theology. He waxes lyrical when relating how Anselm, then prior of Le Bec in Normandy and later archbishop of Canterbury, regularly came to the abbey to teach the young monks. "He bestowed on me so assiduously the benefits of his learning and with such ardor labored at this that it seemed as if I alone were the unique and special reason for his frequent visits." This must have been around 1070.¹⁷

A WISE OLD WOMAN

Legitimated by Mary and supported by the Church, the mother no longer resigned herself to the limitations of her sex and status. She assumed the attitude and displayed the wisdom of a wise old woman who could be called on for advice. "All the people who had known her earlier, especially the noblemen and noblewomen, were eager to speak with her; they found her eloquent and at the same time restrained in her speech." *Faceta et temperans* Guibert calls her, refined and moderate. He even described her as speaking with the authority of a bishop.¹⁸ She did all of this in a public but oral context, in what can be called the public orality. Having begun at about the age of forty (ca. 1067), she persevered for another forty years. This we can infer from the fact that she was still alive in 1104, when Guibert was elected abbot of Nogent. When she entered her anchorhold she still had a complete life ahead of her, this time one of her own choosing, and there can be little doubt that this gave her deep satisfaction. About the end of her life, Guibert writes:

O Lord, Thou knowest with what inward sight she used to speak of the good and ill. . . . By many visions, in which I and others figured, she foresaw things that

would happen long afterwards, some of which I see are surely coming to pass or have already come, and the rest I as certainly expect to befall. . . .

O God, with what warnings she urged me to keep worldly lusts out of my mind, . . . bidding me always be on my guard against juvenile instability, to bridle the mind wandering through mazes of thought. Discussing these matters, she might have been thought some eloquent bishop rather than the illiterate woman she was.¹⁹

From her anchorhold Guibert's mother, too, had contact with Anselm of Canterbury, the beloved teacher of her son. The "illiterate" mother and her "literate" son thus gradually grew closer together.²⁰

THE VEIL OF WIDOWHOOD AND THE ORDINATION OF THE DEACONESS

Three years before her death the old woman obtained official sanction for her *de facto* position by assuming the widow's veil. Guibert and Anselm had their reservations about this move: Guibert referred to the canonist Ivo of Chartres in his attempt to convince his mother that the bestowal of the widow's veil was not a rite recognized by Church law.²¹ His mother, however, could appeal to the practice of consecrating widows and deaconesses, which had been common ever since its revival in Carolingian times. Prominent widows who acquired supervisory roles in churches and monasteries had themselves consecrated according to an official *ordo*. In the many manuscripts of the "Romano-German Pontifical" from the tenth and subsequent centuries this *ordo* has been preserved, both for the widow's blessing, the *consecratio viduae*, and for the ordination of the deaconess, *Ad diaconam faciendam*. According to this pontifical a woman who received the simple widow's blessing was placed by the bishop or priest in the tradition of the New Testament prophetess Anna (Luke 2: 36), who dressed in widow's weeds and "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers day and night." The widow herself took the veil from the altar and was recognized as a professed widow, a "vowess." The more elaborate formula for the ordination of the deaconess moreover emphasized that God had preserved the prophetess Anna into a great old age so that she could prophesy at the circumcision of Jesus. God had subsequently decreed by means of apostolic intention that deaconesses should instruct young girls and young women at their baptism.²²

The *ordo* prescribed that the deaconess be ordained by the bishop. The rite therefore functioned as an upgraded widow's blessing; it invested

the deaconess with one of the major orders in the church and lent her genuine authority. On the basis of contemporary glosses, which make no distinction between the two forms (vowess and deaconess), and the statement by Bishop Atto of Vercelli that wise old women who began leading a religious life turned themselves over to the priests and were viewed as deaconesses, scholars have concluded that in practice there was only one rite, the widow or deaconess ordination.²³ Because matrons and mothers were excluded from the only “real” *ordinatio* the Church had in stock for women, namely the consecration of virgins, they received an upgraded widow’s blessing. It was in this context that Abelard, in the twelfth century, could insist to Heloise, then in charge of the Paraclete, that she was “a deaconess, that which we now call abbess,” and ascribe to her almost imperial authority.²⁴ It must have been this upgraded consecration that Guibert’s mother chose for herself.

At a time when enclosure rituals for lay recluses had not yet been formulated, this liturgy fittingly inserts the anchoress into the Church’s ministry of salvation, to sanction the public role that she in fact fulfilled and to give it luster and appeal—and perhaps actual power as well.²⁵ Although the faithful already accepted the prophetic activity of the old matron, they now heard her charged by virtue of apostolic intention to pass on her God-given wisdom. She was in a sense ritually invested with an order that was missing in the written manuals of the Church but that everyone knew ought to be there. To quote Giles Constable, who in his turn quoted Mary Douglas: “The object of the ritual is not to deceive God but to re-formulate past experience. By ritual and speech what has passed is restored so that what ought to have been prevails over what was, and permanent good intention prevails over temporary aberration.”²⁶ The officially recognized deaconess of the early Church and the factual prophetess of the medieval period merge here. And thanks to the apostolic intention referred to in the pontifical, Guibert’s mother and her female followers are placed in a long, venerable line of servants of God, almost as long as the line of the priestly servants based on apostolic succession.

Guibert’s portrait of his mother includes a number of striking peculiarities. Although he reports some extremely intimate details that only a real mother’s child could know, his description all the same creates the impression that it was intended more as an ideal picture than as a factual life story, more as a typology of an exemplary, God-fearing woman than as a biographical sketch. He never mentions his mother’s name, for example.

He also leaves us with the distinct impression that this devout woman could not read, that she certainly knew no Latin and had little in the way of an education. Why else would she have to learn the Psalms late in life by listening to the murmurings of the old nun? At other points, however, he casually mentions that he himself learned to read under her supervision—which meant that she was literate after all—and that she employed chaplains to read mass and the hours for her. It is inconceivable, then, that she heard the Psalms for the first time in her middle age. Evidently he considered knowledge of this kind improper for a young woman and thus unsuitable for his ideal portrait of a God-fearing woman. Only at a later stage of life were women supposed to occupy themselves with such matters. This brings me to Guibert's intentions as an author and the character of his work.

Guibert the Author and His Work

A TRUE HISTORIAN

Guibert was by nature a true historian. "Avant tout," the editor Labande maintains, "ce moine est historien. Il a un sens très précoce de la vérité historique, des moyens par lesquels il convient de tenter d'établir celle-ci." And this is how he was viewed in the Middle Ages. He was a keen observer and recorded exactly what he saw, even if that fell outside the normal pattern. The history of Nogent in the second part of his autobiography, with its painstaking historical and archaeological facts, never ceases to amaze readers. He was a great storyteller besides. Again and again new anecdotes occurred to him, which he then added to his account, if necessary as an appendix. He loved writing. He was happiest sitting with pen in hand brooding over an elegant description or an artful turn of phrase. At the end of his life it grieved him to have to dictate his work "entirely from memory, with only a voice, no hand and no eyes," as he wrote in a preface to Norbert of Xanten.²⁷

During his stay in St. Germer he had begun recording his own oral sermons and adding bits of Bible commentary. He recounts this in his autobiography with satisfaction. While visiting a nearby monastery, he writes, his abbot asked him to do the preaching. "Taking the text of my sermon from the Book of Wisdom, I contented myself with that single word for the homily I was asked to give: 'Wisdom, that is, overcomes

evil; she reaches therefore from end to end mightily, and orders all things sweetly,” *Sapientia, videlicet, vincit malitiam, attingit a fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponit omnia suaviter*.²⁸ It was a programmatic sermon in which Guibert set forth his view on the essence of the Christian, for him monastic, life. This sermon happens to have been preserved (and published under the name of Bernard of Clairvaux). *Sapientia*, spiritual wisdom, is for Guibert the buried treasure that has to be dug out of the field by monks. By persevering in a spiritual—that is, humble and world-forsaking—life shaped by the Benedictine rule, the monk unearths this wisdom.

This first publication of Guibert’s already contained the motto of his life and work, actually the task he envisioned for every true Christian, namely to acquire and transmit true *sapientia*. For him this was not intellectual or bookish learning but, as Barbara Newman has termed it so well, “sapiential knowledge.”²⁹ It was the wisdom that both mother and son found embodied in Pope Gregory the Great. The mother had such a high opinion of the “wonderful understanding” and “extraordinary wisdom” of this Church Father that she chose his feast day to initiate her son’s education.³⁰ And the teacher she selected for this purpose had a dream in which a venerable old man, probably Gregory himself, entrusted the little boy to his care.³¹ Guibert took over this admiration from his mother, but he would only discover the sapiential form of wisdom when he was nearly fifty and still without an office of any consequence. At his wits’ end, he then renounced all the intellectual pretensions and worldly ostentation that had occupied him up to that point. Finally, like his mother, he gave himself up to “the Mother of the heavenly empire, Mary, Mother of God, my only refuge in every need” and unsurpassed source of sapiential knowledge.³²

When Guibert became abbot of Nogent after all, in 1104, he felt called to propagate this wisdom by recording the events of his own life and his own time in the light of the task assigned by God. He began working on *Gesta Dei per Francos* (*The Deeds of God Performed by the Franks*), set in the First Crusade, that same year; next came his three-part autobiography, *De vita sua* (1114), documenting how a sinful person, himself, could develop, despite many setbacks, into a prominent Church leader who had found true wisdom. In the first part of this work he made his point, as noted above, by contrasting his own bungling with the inspiration of his mother and uncle.

During the last years of his life he would write more spiritual and theological treatises: a tract on the Eucharist, for example (before 1119),

and *De laude Mariae*, a Marian theology (c. 1119), which I discuss further below. The theologian Jaroslav Pelikan sees in this latter work the influence of Anselm of Canterbury's teaching on Guibert, which is certainly the case. But it also carries echoes of sapiential knowledge, the fruit of spiritual conversation with his mother. Just as there was mutual enrichment between later anchoresses and Church leaders, with the women inspiring the scholastic theologians to a less abstract, more sapiential form of theology, a similar dynamic appears to have been at work here in my first example. Anselm and Guibert were among the first churchmen to call Mary, the powerful Queen of Heaven, a *mediatrix* between God and humankind. This is a theological idea that the anchoresses featured in this book would cherish. Like Anselm, Guibert took a stand in the Eucharist controversy. One of the points he emphasized was that Jesus was not daily "crucified" on the altar, as some theologians maintained, but had died on the cross once and for all, *semel*, and that this was daily represented in the mass.³³ This, too, proved to be a pivotal idea among anchoresses and among devout women in general. Juliana of Cornillon would make it the core of her Corpus Christi liturgy. Almost all the central themes of my book, then, already seem to be present in the case of Guibert and his mother.

De vita sua has not come down to us in medieval form. The story of the mother was unknown to people of the Middle Ages. Because later generations of copyists and editors placed more value on Guibert's historical observations, the most they copied was part of his account of the rebellion in Laon or of the new monastic movement. The mother surfaced again only in the seventeenth century, thanks to the humanist scholar d'Archery. He rediscovered a great deal of Guibert's work, some of it in the author's own hand preserved in Nogent and Laon, and published what he found. Migne reprinted these texts in his *Patrologia Latina*.³⁴

CENTRAL THEMES

First of all, in his autobiography Guibert gives us an ideal portrait of his mother as a pious, nonlearned woman but also sketches her development into a publicly appreciated anchoress. As a counterpart to the type of his mother, the laywoman, he presents the type of the God-fearing, equally nonlearned layman in the person of his uncle, Evrard of Breteuil, and the

type of the learned cleric, himself. It is important to compare these three models of religious formation and to examine in greater detail the model of the God-fearing woman and the framework in which it was anchored, namely that of public orality.

Second, the oral culture of medieval Christianity, the sphere in which anchoresses operated, is an important issue in each of the following chapters, where it appears in varying forms and facets. The final chapter will then provide a thematic conclusion based on the information collected. The point made here is that in an oral culture the acquisition and transmission of knowledge proceeds along different lines from those that generally interest historians, oriented as they are to learning transmitted by schools and scholars. Two ways of acquiring knowledge are introduced here, that of educational institutions and of orality. These, too, will be discussed again in connection with the examples in the following chapters.

Third, Mary repeatedly appears to be the great inspirer of the “non-schooled” forms of knowledge. Lame Margaret would go so far as to call her *doctrinx* and *magistra veritatis*. Likewise, Mary’s motherhood gave the earthly (in some cases only spiritual) motherhood of the anchoresses luster and social prestige. For this reason Mary comes up repeatedly in the following chapters. The form of instruction practiced by Mary and the anchoresses, known in the Middle Ages as prophecy, is not mentioned by Guibert in so many words. Yet his implicit presentation of its characteristics will allow me to introduce the notion here—one that will be further developed by Yvette and especially Juliana of Cornillon and theologians of her time. Nor does Guibert make any explicit statements about text forms available to anchoresses for recording their ideas. The writing of Latin treatises was of course out of the question, but were there other genres that they could use instead, or did these women have no text type at all at their disposal? Guibert makes one striking comment about a booklet kept by his uncle Evrard, possibly an early form of the personal notebooks of the thirteenth-century *mulieres religiosae* (Eve of St. Martin) or the *rapi-aria* of the brothers and sisters of the Modern Devotion.³⁵

The primary aim of this chapter is to explore the possibilities open to religious women, and anchoresses in particular, in a largely oral society. The phase of life of the woman in question is an important issue in this connection, my fourth central theme. Women of mature years, who were perceived as having reached the age of discretion, had rather different opportunities from marriageable girls and young matrons. We see this in the case of Yvette as well.

After all this, there remains the final important question of why life in an anchorhold proved an attractive option for women like Guibert's mother.

THREE MODELS OF THE GOD-FEARING LIFE

From the anecdotes that Guibert relates about his mother, I infer that he considered it proper for women to receive their education and religious training through practical experience and observation. Women observed examples—the old nun, Mary—and imitated them in their own lives. They learned by listening and quietly repeating to themselves what they had heard. It was similar to Mary's way of responding to the words of the angel, keeping and pondering them in her heart. This was apparently how women were supposed to behave. They enjoyed no formal education and acquired no book learning, although they may have read books. They obtained no training to practice a profession. Their knowledge can therefore be characterized as *sapientia*. It was recorded in the book of life, the *liber vitae*, and preserved in their hearts. Young or married women could use it only in educating their children and household staff. Only at a mature age could they direct it toward the outside world.

Part of the ideal portrait for girls of the upper classes was that they would marry and thus help perpetuate the family line and preserve its property—Yvette's life shows a similar pattern. Only when that task had been fulfilled could they possibly think of shaping their lives along different lines. Only then could they count on support from sympathetic Church leaders, if not from their families. From that moment on they could risk deviating from the expectations of others and devote their lives to tasks of their own choosing. Nancy Partner speaks in this connection of "a positive striving for autonomy, self-direction, psychic wholeness and choice."³⁶ This is not to say that they encountered no problems. When Guibert's mother decided to retreat to the anchorhold, she first had to take refuge in the home of a bishop friend—apparently in order to escape possible reprisals from her in-laws. She secretly had her spiritual guide build her a cell, then went to live there. From that moment on she enjoyed the protection of the abbey.

Evidently the ideal Guibert held up to pious women in his autobiography, that of providing financial support to hermit knights, was not enough for his mother. It is clear that the idea of working at her own

sanctification in a convent did not appeal to her either; she did not seek isolation from the world. The reclusive life gave her access to the public domain of religious leadership. She could undertake modest forms of public activity and gain an authority of her own.

Count Evrard of Breteuil, a well-known knight, was a model of the God-fearing layman. Like Guibert's mother, he experienced a conversion to the religious life at an older age, *in aetate positus florulenta*. As was fitting for a true knight, he did not become an anchorite but a hermit in the forest; this was in 1073. The hermit Evrard typically asked his learned visitors to write something in the little book that he carried with him for this purpose—a pious saying, a quotation, a short text. The uncle could not decipher the texts himself, Guibert maintains, but presented them to other visitors who then explained them to him. Later Evrard would enter the abbey of Marmoutier. Because this devout man was very attached to his nephew, Guibert learned a great deal from him.³⁷

In Guibert's typology the layman was as illiterate as the laywoman. He did not read himself, did not attend school, but learned through life experience. Unlike the mother, however, the layman did have books and acquired a bookish form of wisdom. As a man he was apparently expected to have access to books—which the mother in fact had as well, although this was suppressed in the image projected. Evrard saw to it that the maxims of the learned were set down in writing, and he shared them by having others read from his book. He did not, in other words, do any teaching of his own.

Guibert himself embodied the third model. He was the prototype of the cleric, educated in Latin, busy with books day and night; he even read secretly under his blankets at night. He amassed knowledge of the Latin poets and Holy Scripture; he was a scholar, a professional. His schooling in *scientia*, Latin learning, prepared him for a high ecclesiastical function. But when he longed to become abbot, he was found lacking in genuine wisdom, *sapientia*, and was not elected until he had acquired it the hard way. Apparently the wisdom of his mother represented the highest form of wisdom for him as well. Book learning was not enough for an exemplary Christian and a religious leader. The essential thing was to acquire and transmit true *sapientia*, genuine wisdom, for only in this way could a church leader communicate salvation to others.³⁸

An Oral Culture

IMITATIO MORUM

In the time of Guibert's mother—and the other anchoresses of my quintet—a period in which schools and classroom teaching were not yet part of everyday life, both men and women acquired their knowledge through practical experience. They had internships, we would say today. Squires learned skills from a knight; apprentices from a master craftsman; new anchoresses from an experienced old woman. Children listened to the wise words of their grandmother and altar boys learned how to celebrate mass by observing an officiating priest. It was learning through *imitatio morum*, as Theodulphus of Orleans characterized the training for the priesthood in Carolingian times. Boys intended for the priesthood would be raised in the house of a bishop and thus molded for their future profession.³⁹ Guibert's description of his own basic education from a house tutor was therefore not essentially different from the education of his mother.

Learning by doing was the most common form of education, rather than attending school where a teacher taught from a textbook. Reading was a practical skill learned at home, as in the case of Guibert. Books, to the extent that they were used, served more as memory prompts or eye-openers than as sources of knowledge. They were often a sort of notebook, like the one kept by Uncle Evrard, or a picture book, like the books of hours that later became so popular in northern Europe. Classroom teaching was reserved for students, in Guibert's time at the main abbey schools, in the twelfth century at the cathedral schools, and from the thirteenth century onward at the universities. This was not something for ordinary boys and girls; they had a personal mentor—if possible someone whose example was worth "taking to heart." William of St. Thierry, a younger contemporary of Guibert and abbot of the nearby St. Thierry outside Rheims, would advise young people as follows in his *Golden Letter*—a work also read in circles of devout women: "Choose a mentor, imprint his example firmly and keep the memory of him so respectfully alive, that you are led by it in your own actions."⁴⁰ This is exactly the relationship of Guibert's mother with her old nun and Mother Mary, as well as between later anchoress pairs like Juliana of Cornillon and Eve of St. Martin.

It may surprise us that a learned abbot hardly distinguishes between the practical, nonliterary training of unschooled persons and the education

for monks. But in this prescholastic world there was not yet a deep divide between laypersons and clerics, monks and women, in matters of education and cultural transmission.⁴¹ In fact, in this society, where people learned mainly from the book of life, the *liber vitae*, women typically functioned as teachers.⁴²

TWO PATHS TO DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

There remained, however, an important domain of knowledge that could not be accessed in daily life. This knowledge was by its very nature written, consisting of the works of the “ancients,” the *Litterae*, as well as the Word of God, the *Sacra Pagina*. This was book learning in the full sense of the word, recorded in Latin and transmitted in schools. Men proficient in this knowledge were considered *litterati*, men of letters; all others were *illiteratae* or *indoctae*, no matter how high the level of their education.⁴³ The great difference in the religious training of men and women lay in this book learning, the Latin knowledge of the Bible and theology. The young priests of Theodulphus not only gained experience in the house of their bishop; they also spent time reading in the library and studying Latin books. They were not only “trained” but “schooled” as well. Ecclesiastical politics after the Gregorian Reform and the influence of magisters at cathedral schools and the university were instrumental in making this schooling and book learning the prerequisite for an ecclesiastical function. As Robert Moore formulated it: “a new . . . clerical elite, formally defined by ordination but distinguished and united above all by its common Latin culture, was a central goal and consequence of the eleventh-century revolution.”⁴⁴ This had played no role in former centuries, when anyone, regardless of his status, could be seized by the new ways of knowing. In the twelfth century it became an important point of contention between the clergy and the literate lay public. The idea that women were not supposed to be bookish had its roots here.⁴⁵

This is not to say that women, and unschooled men, were denied all access to divine knowledge as such.⁴⁶ Even here there seems to have been room to maneuver. With an appeal to God’s Spirit, who blows where he wishes, men like William of St. Thierry and in the following century pastorally inspired theologians like Caesarius of Heisterbach declared that there were two routes by which God could reveal divine knowledge: the route of acquired knowledge and theology, that is, the way of learning,

scientia; and the second route of (orally) inspired wisdom, *sapientia*, or *cognitio*, as it was also called. Here, in other words, oral society actually penetrated the domain of written theology. *Scientia* was the territory of theologians and scholars; the accumulated knowledge was stored in (Latin) books and transmitted to *litterati* in schools. *Ratio* was lord and master of this domain, together with an unbridled drive for learning. Guibert confesses that he was so gripped by Ovid and classical pastoral poetry that he could not help but write such songs himself. His study of the Bible and theology suffered as a result.⁴⁷ Later his mother would still warn him “to bridle the mind wandering through mazes of thought.” Like Juliana and Eve later, the mother saw the inherent dangers. Another great disadvantage, at least in the eyes of mystically gifted women, was that learned persons could never penetrate far enough into God’s unfathomable being to speak about him in positive terms. God eluded all humanly attainable knowledge. At most they could talk about God in terms of what he was not.

On that point the second route of God’s Revelation was more promising. This was the way of God-given knowledge, not recorded in books but bestowed directly by God himself. A person could not go in search of this; it was a gift to be accepted in loving devotion. *Amor ipse intellectus est* would be the motto of William of St. Thierry.⁴⁸ If travelers on this path prepared themselves for this gift of grace in humble devotion and with the necessary self-denial, it might happen that they would be directly admitted to heaven to witness the mysteries of God. This took place in visions and mystical raptures. In the case of Guibert’s mother little is said about this explicitly—such statements were the fruit of a later period—but there is evidence that she did have experiences of this kind. The unschooled, *illiterata* mother progressed further in the seeing of God than her learned, *litteratus* son. She learned from Mary in visions. She saw her husband in purgatory. She foresaw the future. Women in particular received this form of knowledge. And if they had reached the age of wise old womanhood, they would also present this to the outside world.

These two ways to divine knowledge were not necessarily polar opposites or mutually exclusive; they in fact complemented each other. Theologians with a mystical bent and highly educated mystical women would meet on their spiritual journeys, and would even arrive at fertile forms of collaboration. That which eluded arguments of the *ratio* could be clarified by the Holy Spirit or by Mary. Knowledge became wisdom, a higher form of knowing, which included an understanding of good and evil; it had, in other words, a moral and ethical dimension. The mother possessed this

wisdom to a high degree, while Guibert had to learn—from the book of life—that his Latin schooling and verbal sophistication had failed him in this respect. He, too, would receive such wisdom only at a mature age.

This second road to divine knowledge fits seamlessly into the oral society's pattern for acquiring knowledge and transmitting culture; it is actually the same process translated to the spiritual plane. It was legitimized in the Church by God's command to make public the insights he bestows on his elect. It prepared the receiver, in other words, for public religious leadership. The Old Testament form of prophecy offered the theological foundation for this form of leadership. God bestowed inspired knowledge not just for the benefit of the person concerned but for the entire community.⁴⁹

Listening to the religious women—or their biographers—with a historical-critical ear, we realize that consciously or unconsciously they were responding to the new developments in society and the Church. They thus managed to break down certain barriers raised by the Gregorian Reform. The knowledge women had garnered when they were young might in later life be reexperienced in dreams and visions; thus it could be legitimized and applied. Guibert's mother is a prime example of this process. Even "forbidden" forms of knowledge, as of the Bible and theology, could be justified as God-given illuminations.⁵⁰ Yvette, for example, would simply "know" through inspiration which Bible passages she should read to a desperate young monk.

The women who occupied themselves with Bible study and theology faced the same dilemma as male scholars who had received their training in the time prior to the scholastic monopoly; their problems were similar to those of the mystically inspired men who found bookish lessons too limited. Especially in the twelfth century these men became entangled in a competitive struggle with early scholasticism. Herman of Tournai (ca. 1090-after 1142), a younger contemporary of Guibert and also an admirer of Anselm, provides a captivating glimpse of this in his history of the monastery of St. Martin near Tournai. In the last decades of the eleventh century his teacher Odo had been a charismatically gifted scholar at the cathedral school of Tournai. Trained in the prescholastic tradition, he taught the *artes liberales* walking around with his students as the old peripatetics had done (1087–92). Moreover, "he did not lecture to his students about words, like some modern teachers, but, like Boethius and the other doctors

of antiquity, he lectured about things.” The new masters and many students as well were critical of this, partly because Odo did not teach the new subjects of logic and dialectics, and partly because he did not apply the scholastic teaching method of *quaestio* and *disputatio*.

Herman then describes how Odo converted to the anchoritic life as a way to escape the conflict. He, in other words, opted for exactly the same solution as the wise women.⁵¹ Apparently he no longer felt at home in that rational, logical world and envisioned a broader perspective for himself, one in which schooling and spiritual formation went hand-in-hand.⁵² With a few fellow canons he withdrew into a small, derelict chapel just outside the city, beyond the immediate reach of the cathedral—just as Yvette and the first beguines would do. At that time it was not yet a leper colony but a refuge and burial place for victims of St. Anthony’s fire. Here he began his inspired training of young people, including Herman himself, and undertook pastoral work among the faithful. After some time he gave in to external pressure and remodeled his secular community of hermits into a monastic community under a rule—another move made by many women. He would eventually become bishop of Cambrai (1105–13), leaving behind him at last the kind of limitations imposed on women. He was able to do what they were not, namely assume a canonically ordained form of leadership.

MARY SEDES SAPIENTIAE

Without explicitly mentioning the two paths, Guibert illustrated them with the example of his mother, the seer, and himself, the man of learning. Subsequently he had the two merge on the upper road of what he calls *sapientia*, the highest form of wisdom or knowledge attainable by a human being. In his first sermon and in his autobiography he did not go into the matter any further, but in his later *De laude Mariae*, a treatise on Marian theology, he devoted a great deal of attention to precisely this issue.⁵³

In this work he maintains that Mary acquired her special position in salvation history because she possessed true *sapientia*. Mary, Guibert claims, was after Christ the most blessed of all humankind and exalted above all creatures. She was the cause of our redemption, *redemptionis origo fuit*.⁵⁴ Through her merits Christ could descend to earth and begin his redemptive

task. Because she had consented to become the mother of God, he could become our Savior. As a mother she bore within her body the fullness of the divine nature, and after Christ's crucifixion she again shared in the divine nature of her Son through her own assumption into heaven. There she reigned with him, *Christo suo corregnet*; she was Queen of Heaven and Earth.⁵⁵ We recognize here the heavenly queen as depicted on twelfth-century tympana and miniatures, crowned by her Son, Christ the King, or by the two persons of the Trinity together, God the Father and God the Son. With a firm hand she governed the heavenly household and its earthly subjects. She thus fulfilled a crucial function in divine rule. The "woman of indescribable beauty" who showed Guibert's mother how to call her son to order in the abbey church of St. Germer was undoubtedly this queenly figure of Mary.

But these royal honors had been preceded by Mary's humility and wisdom. On earth she had attained the wisdom of Christ, ascending the throne of Solomon with its six steps of the fear of God and devotion, knowledge and perseverance, sound counsel and understanding.⁵⁶ She had known true inwardness, had dwelt in the innermost court, *in atrium interius*—is Guibert suggesting here that Mary had been a kind of spiritual anchoress? Through her detachment from outward show and her withdrawn life she had found true wisdom and was thus able to serve others. For, at the same time, Mary was full of grace her whole life long, *gratia plena non implenda*, and she could bestow this grace on others until the end of time. She functioned as a *sequester*, a mediator between God and humankind, a *mediatrix*. Through her motherly nature she knew compassion and could intercede with Christ on behalf of those who were devoted to her.⁵⁷

Once again this calls up an image from iconography, this time of Mary as *Sedes Sapientiae* or the throne of Solomon. Seated on a throne, staring straight ahead with a prophetic gaze (and in some cases with plaited hair as in sculptures of Old Testament prophetesses), she is more than a mother holding her child on her lap. She is divine *sapientia* in person and at the same time the realized *sapientia* of the believer. As a humble virgin she had shown this true wisdom in her willingness to give birth to the Son of God; as the pregnant mother of Jesus she had carried the divine *sapientia* within her; and after her assumption she shared in it in heaven. Seated on her throne, she now mediated peace and beatitude in her kingdom, the *imperium*, symbolized by the scepter with the orb in her

hand.⁵⁸ Ordinary mortals had to strive to reach the throne of this *sapientia* by means of the six steps. Study, acquiring knowledge from books, could be part of this process, but it was not enough. It could only be completed with God's grace. As the later theologian Hugh of Balma would write: "this eternal wisdom can be professed but not taught," not transmitted, that is, from one person to another.⁵⁹

Evidently this wisdom and power of the Mother of God radiated out onto earthly mothers. They shared in her honor. And they found legitimation through her example. If they imitated Mary, as Guibert's mother clearly did, their actions acquired an aura of authority. By emulating the humble Mother of God in their earthly life and gaining her *sapientia*, the highest humanly attainable form of wisdom and knowledge, these women acquired a legitimized and influential position in religious society.

In this connection it is striking that Guibert in the same treatise calls Mary the (passive) *porta* through which God came to us. Nothing here indicates Mary's active participation in the process of salvation; she is simply the way God chose to take.⁶⁰ Hedwig Röckelein notes correctly that in contrast to the autobiography, where Mary took decisive action, Guibert's treatise ascribes to her little in the way of agency. There seems to be a contradiction here. We can conjecture that Guibert, who suffered at times from his mother's assertive behavior, tried, as it were, to rein her in by "taming" Mary. The two women were unimpressed. And the community of the faithful chose their side.

THE LOVE OF LEARNING (M/F)

To sum up, one thing is clear: priests and monks were *litterati*, while laypersons, especially women, were not. As *illiteratae* they had no access to sacred learning because that was recorded in books. In some cases they could read, perhaps owned books themselves, but for them these books were eye-openers for the experiential wisdom stored in their memory. Sacred learning and theology did not belong to this domain.

This does not mean, however, that divine knowledge was necessarily a closed book for them, for God had more ways of disseminating it, namely through dreams and visions. From a historical perspective, we can surmise that literate men and women, clerics and laypersons, arrived at their knowledge in roughly the same way. They all meditated on what was

imprinted on their (collective) memory. Acquiring knowledge was for everyone a matter of doing what Guibert's mother had done with the penitential psalms: *quos saporose, ut sic dixerim, diebus ac noctibus ruminabat*, day and night ruminating on the words, chewing and savoring them, as it were.⁶¹ All of them experienced their knowledge as God-given. Even the great scholars viewed their new insights—literally in-sights—as divine inspiration; see, for example, the anecdote about Anselm, who hit on new, elucidating ideas for his *Proslogion* during matins in church. His biographer Eadmer noted: “Then suddenly one night during matins the grace of God illuminated his heart, the whole matter became clear to his mind, and a great joy and exultation filled his inmost being.”⁶² Jean Leclercq, the great Benedictine who from childhood was himself immersed in this age-old monastic meditation, has shown in his masterpiece *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* that this form of study was typical of Benedictine monks and prescholastic scholars.⁶³ Because women and monks had this in common, they stood together against the scholastics of a later age, of which Guibert and his teacher Anselm were the precursors. All of them gleaned from these meditations a great deal of sacred knowledge.

From a theological perspective, this way of knowing was legitimized by viewing it as prophecy, as revelations of God's hidden knowledge about the present, past, and future. However, an inevitable complicating factor loomed in the case of lay and female prophets, because prophecies by their very nature require explanation. They are not clear-cut instructions but images, exempla, dreams, and visions—encoded messages, as it were. They are to be decoded and disseminated as verbal messages in a *sermo propheticus*.⁶⁴ This proved the greatest stumbling block for women. Could one allow women, the theologians wondered, to judge for themselves whether their dreams had been genuine messages from God for fellow human beings? And could one leave it to them to translate visions into verbal messages that they propagate themselves? The church hierarchy gave a negative answer to this question, visionary women and the common faithful for the most part a positive one. It follows that women who wanted to spread their insights themselves needed more legitimation and authority than their own words could offer. In one way or another their statements had to be sanctioned. This is where Mary as an authority proved an invaluable aid. But reaching the “age of discretion” helped as well, as did the sanction of the enclosed life in an anchorhold.

The Female Life Cycle

THE AGE OF DISCRETION

One of the most striking elements in the biographical sketch of Guibert's mother is the fact that she did not become publicly active until she was in her forties. This immediately raises the question of whether this was true of more medieval women who profiled themselves in society. And indeed, Hildegard of Bingen was over forty when she wrote to Bernard of Clairvaux and published her first book, the *Scivias*. She had had visions since childhood, but only then went public with them. The same is true of Julian of Norwich. A young adult at the time of her near-death experiences, she published her interpretation of them only when she was in her late forties. Margery Kempe's life was no different. She was in her fortieth year when she began her independent activity and—a new element—had become a widow when she published her memoirs. Exactly the same was true of Birgitta of Sweden. Even Christine de Pizan published her serious studies after turning forty, and she attached special importance to this age. Not only in the lands between the Seine and the Elbe, then, and not only in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries did the transition to mature adulthood form an important caesura in the life of a woman. From that moment on she could venture to assume a public identity.⁶⁵

Turning to my five anchoresses, we find that Yvette of Huy was thirty-three when she had herself officially enclosed, a number with symbolism of its own; from that moment on she began having mystical visions, and by the time she had reached her forties and fifties she was playing an increasingly public role. Juliana of Cornillon had her full-moon vision as a young adult of about nineteen, but she presented her ideas to the great church reformers when she was somewhere near forty. The first time we see Eve of St. Martin moving to the foreground is in approximately 1250, when she was that age as well. Like Yvette, Lame Margaret experienced the great caesura in her life at the same age Christ was when he began his public ministry. Her hagiographer does not tell us how much time passed before she then actually began to exercise leadership.

This leads me to conclude that some adjustment is needed of the view, dominant in modern historiography, that women had little leeway for public action. Mature women, especially those past the age of forty, did have that possibility, albeit to a modest degree. Widowhood, which

gave them legal freedom of action, was advantageous in this respect but not a prerequisite. The ages of thirty and thirty-three were also peak years of opportunity in the life of a Christian, but this seems to have applied more to clerics than to women living in the world, although Yvette and Lane Margaret may have taken this as a guideline. Support for this interpretation in terms of life phases can be found both in life-cycle treatises and in anthropology. This will be further delineated in the following study of Yvette and in Chapter 7.

The Prophetess in the Anchorhold

WOMEN IN THE TOWER

Life in an anchorhold offered women protection from intrusive relatives or lustful men and the guarantee that they could not be brushed aside as hypocrites or frauds. They lived in full view of the people, which in itself ruled out deception.⁶⁶ It was convincing proof of divine inspiration.

Equally important was the fact that the anchorhold offered a recognizable setting from which the women could operate. People with a message typically need a frame of reference that sets them apart and makes others willing to listen to them. Women certainly need such a context. A case in point is that of medieval queens. As part of the *consortium regni*, queens enjoyed authority and were listened to by virtue of their office. Within that context they were able to wield power.⁶⁷ Abbesses and prioresses, too, operated from an institutional setting. Men who aspired to leadership usually had a pregiven institutional framework, which lent their words authority. They were feudal lords or city magistrates; they had a position in the Church or in a guild. Religiously inclined men usually sought to join an order or they became priests, which automatically offered them an institutional context. This was much less a matter of course for women—as it still is today—and there were not nearly as many possibilities. But the anchorhold offered a context that would set religious women apart, literally in this case, and enable them to speak with authority, regardless of the actual words that emerged from their mouths. Wise old women above the age of forty who had opted for the setting of an anchorhold could be assured of attention and respect. Their words carried a prophetic charge. They could rely on Mary's support and derive from her maternal authority. They could even—witness Guibert's mother—

have their authority sanctioned by the Church in a ceremony of consecration. An additional advantage was that the anchorhold would also become reachable for nonnoble women of northern Europe.

The prophetic role of the anchoress may have had its roots in the ancient, pre-Christian tradition of seers, in notions of divination and shamanism that had not yet died out. The life of Christina the Astonishing, for example, a recluse in the Liège area with great authority, has some outstanding features in common with eastern shamanism. Kees Sampsonius shows in his fine study of soothsaying in the Germanic world that women there were specially trained and assigned a separate place so that they would be able to “see” the future. On a scaffold or a tower placed in front of a high fence—which served as the border with the other world and over which the seeress threw hens in order to make contact—these Germanic prophetesses saw what was in store for the community. Sampsonius refers in this connection to legendary women saints like Barbara, who was also placed in a tower from which she “saw” the true faith.⁶⁸ In the preceding chapter I pointed out that women who assumed the role of deaconesses and *Deo Sacratae* were following in the footsteps of these pagan foremothers. Guibert’s mother also placed herself in this tradition. Anchoresses seem to have inherited certain characteristics of these Germanic and early Christian women in the tower. Knowing this can help explain why the community of the faithful was willing to believe that they could see over the border into the other world.

THE *MINISTERIUM* OF THE ANCHORESS

Continuing this line of thought, we might wonder if it is not reductionistic to view anchoresses merely as incidentally gifted persons. Was this really an incidental role reserved for an exceptional individual? Was it not rather an official quality, one inherent in an office, in this case the *officium* or the *ministerium* of the anchoress? If that is the case, the authority of the prophetess has to be detached from the personal qualities of the woman recluse and attached to the profession, the ministry of the anchoress. We could then draw a parallel with the granting of official status to the priesthood, initially also a matter of the charismatic quality of the person serving as elder, *presbyteros*, of the Christian community. His charismatic leadership in the Sunday service and his dispensation of the “gifts of grace” in the liturgical meal became institutionalized in the first

centuries of Christianity and were attached to the office of overseer-bishop and priest. It was laid down in canon law and dissociated from personal qualities—although precisely in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries we see that a priest unworthy in personal terms found it extremely difficult to effectuate his official “worth.” The office of prophet, which existed in the early Church as well, was not institutionalized; pushed to the sidelines by the more dominant priesthood, it lived on nevertheless. Like the entire phenomenon of anchoritism, it was not defined by canon law.⁶⁹ But this does not preclude its remaining a valid practice in daily life; it was simply more dependent on the personal qualities of the individual. Modern scholars tend to overlook the domain of public orality and the function of religious leadership in this sphere because it is not part of “history,” written history that is, and thus does not merit study. This is a misguided approach. If anything “happened” or functioned in historical practice it was in this oral context. Functions defined by canon law were at the time often a dead letter—they were of lesser consequence and should be taken with the necessary skepticism.

For the ordinary faithful, anchoresses were not incidental confidantes but practitioners of a publicly acknowledged profession, functionaries with an office, the office of prophetess in the anchorhold. They sought a suitable liturgical confirmation of this and found it, at least in the case of Guibert’s mother, in the consecration of the widow and deaconess. Even though the only persons eligible to apply for this office were those whom God had chosen, that is, charismatically gifted personalities, once they were ritually established in their anchorhold, they were recognized prophets, professionals with a public function. They could then give assistance to believers in their religious life, expound the Bible, and hear confession. If they were ordained as deaconesses, they even occupied a place, like priests, in a long apostolic tradition. The following chapters will provide a further elaboration of this hypothesis.

We can see, then, that Guibert’s mother is one of our earliest witnesses of the new reclusive lifestyle. She experimented with a religious form of life that would gain great popularity in later centuries. Transplanted from the noble countryside, this free anchoritism would flourish in an urban society of merchants and artisans. We do not know just how the mother organized her life; for that we will have to look at later anchoresses. But thanks to the highly personal sketch by her son, we have a good idea of what—in his view—motivated her to choose this life, and thus of what may have

motivated women in general to opt for this seemingly harsh existence. We gain a glimpse of the opportunities it offered, ones that had been denied them as wives and mothers.

As a young adult Guibert's mother had no opportunity to exploit her potential for social-religious activity and leadership in public life. Guibert suggests that she was a woman with a great sense of duty, who devoted her younger years entirely to her marriage and especially the raising of her children. She hired as her house tutor a man who only later in life had devoted himself to study—an indication, perhaps, that he was one of the first adherents of the new piety. In any case, he bickered with the mother about her young son's extravagant clothing,⁷⁰ and he encouraged her in her desire for the anchoritic life. He also accompanied her to St. Germer. We see in him an intimate spiritual guide.

When she was about forty, new opportunities opened up for her. She now no longer tried to fulfill the expectations of others but chose her own path through life, making use of the possibilities offered by the life cycle. She appears to have been well educated—a quality she must have acquired earlier but for which she could only now be credited. Her knowledge was not only a matter of life experience but included knowledge of the Psalms, “her Gregory,” and probably theology as well. We see here a real-life illustration of the two paths for acquiring knowledge, the one of schooling and Latin scholarship followed by clerics and the one of God-given knowledge and revealed truth open to ordinary inspired believers and women. The mother took as her example an old woman in the convent and followed in the footsteps of Mary. She, like Mary, climbed to the throne of Solomon. Because this form of *sapientia* was valued even more highly by her contemporaries than the ordination of priests or clerical schooling—priests also had to receive it simply as a gift, since acquiring it through study was out of the question—she enjoyed an authoritative position in society. Guibert allows for no misunderstanding on this point.

The *sapientia* of Mary, more highly esteemed than the education of clerics, is the key, in my opinion, to the self-assured and authoritative action of anchoresses like Guibert's mother. A woman who placed herself in the tradition of Mary and took instruction from this humble, withdrawn, wise mother who was also the Queen of Heaven had a legitimized and influential position in religious society, canon law notwithstanding. She even became a conversation partner of learned clerics and theologians, such as Anselm of Canterbury, who visited the mother in her anchorhold.

Her instruction consisted of exempla, images, and visions transmitted by eye and ear. It was knowledge she kept in her heart, wisdom tailor-made to her motherly nature and her internship in the household. This made for success in her role of religious leader. Men who could boast of their book learning had a much more difficult time in this respect—witness Guibert. She possessed the inner calm, the frame of mind that made her both eloquent and restrained in talks with her son and her visitors; eloquent without pomposity or the uncontrollable urge to display superior insight. In their own charismatic way women like Guibert's mother played a role comparable to that of a priest—and in Guibert's view, even that of a bishop.

Yvette of Huy

The Metamorphoses of a Woman

YVETTE, ANCHORESS OF HUY (1158–1228), was a woman of strong character. From her anchorhold on the river Meuse she kept watch over the city and its faithful. Those who struggled to live a good life she consoled, taking their burdens upon her own shoulders. Those who behaved badly she summoned to the window of her cell, and no sincere believer dared to ignore her call. Men and women, clerics and laypersons, even the dean of the collegiate church of Notre Dame reported at her window.

So we are told by Hugh of Floreffe, the Premonstratensian canon who recorded her life shortly after her death.¹ He tells how as a girl of thirteen Yvette had entered an arranged marriage, and how five years later, as a young woman of eighteen, she was already widowed and the mother of three children. Unwilling to remarry, she took the vow of widowhood. As soon as her children were old enough to manage without her, around 1181, she went to work in a leprosarium. On the bank of the Meuse, directly outside the city gates of Huy—an important trading center—stood an old chapel with a poor sort of shelter built for lepers, who were not allowed into the town because of the risk of contagion.² Yvette took up residence with them and cared for the sick. This daughter of a high-ranking city administrator served food to the poor and shared the life of society's rejects. She did this in order to become an outcast herself, one of the "despised of the earth." She in fact did everything to become a leper herself, smearing infected blood on her body and washing herself with polluted bathwater.

What happened, however, was just the opposite of what she had intended. Not only did she remain healthy; she gained the admiration and support of the people in the city. She expanded the leprosarium into a well-equipped hospital, complete with a beautiful chapel and a convent

for the community that she founded for her followers. This group of men and women was one of the earliest beguine communities in Europe.³ Ten years later, when Yvette was about thirty-three years old—an age with symbolic significance—she had herself enclosed as a recluse at the leprosarium chapel. There she received a vision—she, too—in which she had to appear before the judgment seat of the Son of man. She saw Christ seated in his heavenly palace, with Mary, the Mistress of the house, at his side.⁴ Deeply aware of the sins she had committed, Yvette felt nearly condemned. Christ was already turning his face away from her in anger when Mary threw herself at her Son's feet and made a compassionate plea for the recluse. For her own sake she begged him to forgive Yvette's sins. The Son, who could refuse no request from his mother, then granted forgiveness and entrusted Yvette to her special care. "Mother, behold your daughter," he said, "I entrust her to you as your own daughter, as your own special servant forever: preserve and protect and guide her as your own child," paraphrasing the words he had spoken on the cross to Mary and John.⁵ After this vision the recluse had a special bond with Mary: they held intimate conversations, and Yvette performed on earth the tasks assigned to her by her Mistress, the Queen of Heaven and Earth.⁶ It was as if Yvette's self-denial in the leprosarium and rejection of earthly ties outside the anchorhold had freed her for higher service.⁷

This gave her the authority to take action in the leprosarium and in the city. A few examples will make this clear. One of the priests in the lepers' center had fallen in love with a young beguine. When Yvette heard about this, she was terrified of the possible scandal and turned to Mary, "her guardian and advocate." Mary saw to it that the priest resigned and disappeared.⁸ Here, in this first problem case, Yvette still showed little assertiveness herself, but that was soon to change. When the priest-sacristan of Notre Dame, the main church of the town, became involved with a woman and slept with her in the church building, Yvette saw this in her mind's eye and called the guilty parties to account. The woman came and was forgiven; the priest refused and received the message "that he should come to her and make satisfaction to God immediately . . . for he must know that God's judgment was imminent." He kept refusing and actually did die a miserable death.⁹

Some time later, when Yvette in an ecstasy found herself in heaven, she saw flames leaping from the private parts of a woman whom she knew from Huy. After returning to her normal state, she ordered that

this woman be brought to her. Yvette told her what she had seen and about the bodily plague in store for her. Shortly thereafter the woman contracted leprosy: "later she could be seen leading a religious life on the same spot where the holy woman of God made her home."¹⁰

Finally, she even took on the dean of Notre Dame, the most powerful cleric in Huy, a man invested with archdiaconal authority. Because this prelate took a casual approach to the religious life and was also guilty of usury, Mary transported Yvette in spirit into the assembly of the saints where Christ was seated as judge. Here Mary complained to Christ about the violation and shame brought on the church dedicated to her. To comfort her, Christ declared that the dean would be condemned to the fires of hell. "When the glow of the vision had faded," Yvette immediately summoned the dean to her presence. In the form of a confession she revealed to him everything she had seen and implored him to improve his life, but without success. As could be expected, his life soon came to a miserable end.¹¹

It was especially at the dean and canons of the town's main church, prelates of the old school, that Yvette aimed her attacks. She acted less imperiously but with an equal air of authority toward ordinary believers and monks of the new orders. For them she showed greater compassion. In one example Hugh cites—perhaps he was relating his own experience—a young man who had just entered the order and could not stop thinking about a girl who had given him a beautifully woven cloth that he kept under his habit. Yvette "saw" this, of course, and pointed out to him the dangers of this sort of smoldering affection. Anecdotes like this one testify to Yvette's loving care and concern, as well as to her understanding of all-too-human failings. She had done her own share of stumbling, after all, in the years she had spent finding her way.¹²

In another exemplum Hugh tells—again anonymously—that in a state of great doubt he stole out of the abbey apparently because he felt the need to talk to his mentrix. When he approached her cell, his courage failed him, for he was sure that she would reproach him for neglecting his duties. He therefore knocked at the door of her downstairs neighbor, "as if he just happened to be passing by." But he had failed to reckon with Yvette's clairvoyance. She came down and, indeed, reprimanded him. But she also understood that he was more in need of "sweet consolation than bitter reproaches" and began, like the wisest of mothers, *sapientissima mater*, to read to him relevant passages from the Bible—passages the Holy Spirit had taught her.¹³ She talked about

temptations and the power of love. She promised to fight for him and let him enjoy the rewards of her possible victory. But he would also have to act manfully himself: *viriliter age*. Hugh concludes the anecdote with praise for the old woman, “daughter of the great Ruler,” who seemed indifferent to her own welfare as long as she could console others, taking their burdens upon her own shoulders: “You show love where you cannot exercise authority.”¹⁴ She had what the professional clergy lacked, compassion and the ability to inspire others.

Central Themes

The intriguing question for me is how an obedient girl from Huy could have developed into a woman of such stature. Such things do not just happen by themselves. Even if the Church sees Yvette as a person specially chosen by God, in her lifetime she was not a woman lifted out of history, an emissary of God with a cross on her forehead who could go through the world untouched and untouchable. My point of departure as a “profane” historian is the assumption that she—unlike the legendary saints—was a historically comprehensible person whose inspiration and motives (including those of a religious nature, of course) can be investigated with reference to the social and religious circumstances of her time. Two questions interest me in particular. First, why did this woman opt for a reclusorium, and what possibilities did this offer? And second, what is the significance of her age, or more specifically, how did she take advantage of the possibilities for metamorphosis offered by the successive stages of her life?

These two themes, already touched on in my analysis of Guibert’s mother, can be further explored here. Like the mother of Guibert, Yvette was a woman who began a new life after years of marriage and motherhood. Since she is the subject of a detailed life story, we find out much more about her than about that earlier foremother, although we have to peel away the hagiographical packaging to arrive at historically reliable information. The author writes explicitly about Yvette’s prophetic gifts—something Guibert did not yet do—and gives numerous examples of her moral leadership. He hints that she fulfilled a quasi-priestly function and describes the ritual forms it assumed in her visions. Like Guibert’s mother, Yvette appears to have identified with the older tradition of the deaconess. Mary fulfilled a legitimizing function for this anchoress as

well, and Hugh makes a special effort to provide the theological underpinning. Between the lines we glean some information about Yvette's education and her religious formation and can compare it with that of other religious women of her time who are beginning to appear in the sources. We discover that quite a number of women were surprisingly well educated and made good use of their training. As a gifted historian with an eye for colorful detail, the hagiographer supplies a great deal of information about Yvette's daily life and a glimpse into the conflict in which women of her stature found themselves—the conflict between personal ambitions and social expectations, between giving in to the family and fighting for their own ideals. Finally, it becomes evident that for Yvette, as for Guibert's mother and the anchoresses of the following chapters, a well-defined place in the Church was indispensable for the realization of her own ideals. This adds color and depth to her choice of the anchorhold.

I shall begin with a brief characterization of the *Vita* and its author.

The *Vita* and Its Author

Yvette was fortunate in having the highly gifted Premonstratensian canon Hugh of Floreffe as her hagiographer.¹⁵ Himself an intimate friend of the recluse, he was commissioned to write the *Vita* by his abbot, John (abbot of Floreffe from 1221 to 1239), Yvette's confessor and fellow townsman. In vivid exempla he captured Yvette's unique personality and her special position in Huy. It cost him much more effort to explain where her authority came from, in other words to identify the spiritual sources of her strength. He speaks in this connection of the *novitas*, the unprecedented nature of her ideas and actions.¹⁶ She was so creative a person, so far in the forefront of the new women's movement, that Hugh did not yet have words available to describe the phenomenon. Besides, he had to deal with the skepticism and incomprehension of the *homines animales* around him, thickheaded persons who had no inkling of spiritual matters.¹⁷ He even had to admit that most of his readers would see Yvette more as a sinner than as a saint, primarily because of the financial transaction ("usury") she undertook for the sake of her children.¹⁸

Struggling with this question of how to capture Yvette's uniqueness, Hugh proved himself less of a church politician than James of

Vitry or Thomas of Cantimpré, who consciously stylized pious women into model saints. James and Thomas used these women's *Lives* to illustrate their own theology and ecclesiastical politics.¹⁹ Hugh went about his task differently. He gave a frank account of Yvette's marriage and did not follow the hagiographic convention of turning his subject into a virgin martyr in disguise. Nor did he model her into a passive bride of Christ.²⁰ Instead, he conscientiously reported Yvette's ideas, and—as if to make sure that nothing important would be left out—he incorporated a wide variety of anecdotes about her ordinary life. He tells of her motherly concerns and her social activities and provides a glimpse into the everyday practice of anchoritism. He has a sharp eye for the social and emotional sides of her existence.

We, too, have problems interpreting Yvette's conduct, although for different reasons. Reading Hugh's attempts to characterize her spirituality, we are inclined to think of her as a mystic, less well known certainly than Hadewych and Ruusbroec—of whom we have original writings—but a genuine mystic nevertheless. Raised in a Protestant or Counter-Reformation tradition, we typically view mystics as devout, otherworldly persons who focused their entire lives on loving encounters with God. Mystics stood outside ordinary life. It is from this perspective that we read and interpret the medieval sources. In James of Vitry's prologue to his *Life of Mary of Oignies*, for example, we read that "someone"—and he clearly means Yvette—was held prisoner in her anchorhold by her heavenly bridegroom so jealously for almost thirty years that she could not even be removed from her cell by force.²¹ This reinforces our preconceived notions, and we forget to investigate whether the female mystic played any kind of historical role, and if so what it might have been.

As Grace Jantzen has convincingly shown, the intimate relationship with God was for medieval mystics never an end in itself but always a point of departure for ordinary life and action. Mysticism was much more than the love relationship we associate with it; it was the possession of knowledge in the fullest sense of the word, and the duty to use it in the service of one's fellow human beings. Mystical knowledge pertained to the hidden things of God. We can therefore better refer to the mystical experiences as revelations, visions, or prophecies, as medieval writers did themselves.²² These are also the terms that Hugh uses while concentrating on the resulting actions. In the following chapters on Juliana and Eve, we will see how the Paris scholastics applied themselves

to further defining the nature and scope of this hidden knowledge, which they, too, characterized as prophecy. Hugh could not have known about their conclusions, but he moved in the same direction.

Hugh notes that in her ecstasies Yvette acquired a great deal of knowledge about matters that had previously been far beyond the reach of the *mulier simplex indoctaque*, the simple and uneducated woman that she was. People were evidently struck by Yvette's erudition, and this had to be explained.²³ He describes the mystical caresses Yvette exchanged with her Beloved and his Mother and the pain she experienced with every parting. He goes much further in this respect than James had done or Thomas of Cantimpré would do, but always concludes by noting that the secret knowledge spurred Yvette to deeds that God wished to perform through her.²⁴ Her ecstasies were mystical prophecies in the medieval sense.

She found such grace loving the Beloved that whenever she gave herself up daily to prayer in her secret mind, she was caught up in the caresses and kisses of the Beloved. . . . Without doubt, this is where she conceived what affect of charity she had for the salvation of all whose strength was such that her word prevailed with all the world in mutual rejoicing, suffering, comfort, correction and edification. How she could give each their due: recalling some from evil, calling others to good, provoking all to the best; she sent to the new recruits of diverse cloisters the regular discipline and re-sent to the experienced. Here she received her cognition of secrets.²⁵

The intimate communion with Christ and his Mother was the well from which Yvette drew the strength and charisma to act with compelling authority. This was the basis of her gift of prophecy, of reading people's thoughts and probing their souls.²⁶ It made her a true, a living saint.

In his description of Yvette's ecstasies Hugh depended on the authority of his abbot, John, who had questioned her about them in her general confession.²⁷ This is significant for us because John was a close friend of the bishop of Liège, Hugh of Pierrepont, and his suffragan at the time, James of Vitry (1226–29). John and James sat together as executors at the deathbed of the bishop in the castle of Huy in 1229.²⁸ We may wonder whether they, as active Church reformers and supporters of the new religiosity, passed the time talking about the new phenomenon of the religious woman. Mary of Oignies had been dead for fifteen years (1213), and James himself had written her *Life*. Christina the Astonishing had died a few years before, (1224), and Thomas of Cantimpré was in the process of recording her *Life*. In the meantime people

had begun talking about Juliana of Cornillon in Liège, and possibly about Eve of St. Martin as well. And here in Huy Yvette had died the year before. Did they talk about her life and how it should be recorded? And do we see a reflection of this in Hugh's work?

Besides his abbot, John, Hugh could rely on the stories of the woman with whom Yvette had shared her anchorhold and to whom she had revealed all the secrets she wanted publicized. In addition, he could tap the memory of the old nurse and draw on his own recollections.²⁹ He did not by any means make public everything we would love to know, but he faithfully included all the information selected by the holy woman and her confidantes. As a result the *Vita* is a veritable gold mine. About Hugh himself nothing more is known.³⁰

It is difficult to determine the audience Hugh had in mind. He reckons with a favorable reception in the circles of the common faithful and probably in the new orders of Cistercians and Premonstratensians as well. But he also attempts to convince the intractable clergy in the town of their moral failings. He goes to great lengths to portray Yvette as a model of meekness and modesty.³¹ She is humility in person. Dutifully she resigns herself to her marriage, and at the meeting with the bishop and prelates she modestly, with a blush on her cheeks, casts her eyes downward and speaks only in answer to questions. To the powerful dean of Notre Dame she reveals what Mary told her in the form of a confession. On the few occasions when Hugh addresses the reader directly, it is to point out her humility: "I ask you, o reader, behold the humility of this most humble woman."³² This was how women of the aristocracy were supposed to act in the company of men. Hugh apparently takes the side here of the established citizenry. Yet he is intensely negative about the (noble) canons and the dean of the collegiate church. Their behavior is the target of stern criticism. For Hugh, we should note, himself a monk raised in the misogynist tradition, it is never women who "give occasion" but men who cannot control themselves.

Relatively little is reported in the way of theological insights or new forms of piety. Yvette evidently made no statements about the Trinity or the question of the Eucharist. Her confessor had asked her about these matters, but she did not commit herself—possibly the Liège theologians were trying to probe into Yvette's position on issues that Juliana was beginning to raise.³³ But there is certainly no dearth of statements on moral and ethical issues. The author's purpose is not to plead for a cult, much less a canonization for Yvette. His text is therefore not

a saint's Life in the Bollandist sense; it belongs instead to the group characterized by Williams-Krapp as "considered to be primarily didactic and edifying in nature or even catechetical in an elitist sort of way, and not meant to be Lives of purported saints."³⁴

No medieval manuscripts of the *Vita* have survived.³⁵ We know only the manuscript of Miraeus (now lost) on which the *Acta Sanctorum* edition is based and a seventeenth-century manuscript now in Trier. In contrast to the *Life of Mary of Oignies*, it did not become known outside the Low Countries, nor did it appear in a vernacular version like those of Lutgart or Christina the Astonishing. Nor do we know anything of a cult. Yvette was not an ecclesiastical—by definition dead—saint with a cult but a living person who inspired others. She was a living legend.³⁶

The Stages in a Woman's Life

A YOUNG GIRL AND THE HONOR OF THE HOUSE

The basic unit of the society in which Yvette grew up was the clan. Or perhaps "House" is a more appropriate term, for it comprised more than just kith and kin. An essential part of the House besides the people were the landed estates and the property. The family and its land, or in the nonagrarian world, the family and its property, were inextricably bound together. The first and most important task of the members of the House was to preserve this unity and pass it on intact to future generations. Each person had to give of his best for the cause. Women had to bear legitimate children so that there would be progeny, and they had to assume responsibility for the household, which could include the workshop. Men fathered the children, worked the land, engaged in trade, or occupied themselves with public affairs. It was the duty of each member to promote the honor of the House. Society at large kept its eyes peeled for any potential blot on its reputation. Also in an urban community like Huy this was the normal pattern. No one—including Yvette—could escape it.³⁷

As the only child of a rich and powerful family, she would as a matter of course marry young and bear many children. Yvette herself had other ideas and resisted marriage: "the law of marriage is a heavy yoke," she complained. Pregnancies, childbirth, the raising of children, and, worst of all, the burden of household chores—Hugh here gives a

precise summary of the tasks of a good housewife—were for her a dismal prospect. She wanted to retain the freedom, *libertas*, of her unattached state. But under the pressure of her parents, their relatives and friends, and even of the city, she consented. Obviously a young girl did not have the freedom to go her own way.³⁸

Two things stand out here. First, no religious motivation is cited for Yvette's resistance to marriage. We almost take it for granted that as a saint in the making she would be unwilling to marry out of a desire to preserve her virginity for Christ. No such reason is given in the text. Since so common a topos could not have been omitted by accident, we have to conclude that it actually did not play a role. Second, we would expect Hugh, the ascetic monk, to smuggle something derogatory about marriage into his story, either implicitly or explicitly. Nothing of this nature can be found in the text either. He gives a neutral account of events and shows no understanding of Yvette's point of view. Evidently he is in complete agreement with the family, and the implicit message to girls is that it is their duty to marry and to place the welfare of the clan above their own sense of well-being. The Church, at least the Church in Liège, did not choose the side of rebellious girls.

An intriguing question is what kind of free status Yvette could have imagined if it were not a religious life. What could a girl have wanted circa 1170 other than marriage or a place in a convent? Hugh says nothing on this point, but a few hints can be found between the lines of his text. Yvette gave evidence later of being well educated.³⁹ Was this what she wanted, to study at the chapter school in Huy and perhaps at higher levels as well? Considering that she was one generation younger than Heloise and that she was raised like her in a family of Church officials, this is not inconceivable. Hugh tells how Yvette had from childhood felt admiration for Mary Magdalene.⁴⁰ In the twelfth-century legend this saint was not a penitent prostitute but a high-spirited young woman betrothed to John the Evangelist. According to the Middle Dutch version, she lived in a bustling commercial town together with her sister Martha (Mary Magdalene was usually identified with the Mary who sat at Jesus' feet). In that city she came under the spell of Jesus when he happened to dine at her neighbors' house; she washed his feet with her hair and joined the group. These legends make no mention of prostitution. What they do include is an account of Mary's mission to southern France, where she preached the Gospel—visual depictions show her as a learned woman addressing the crowd. The last years of

her life, according to this tradition, she spent in a hermitage in southern France.⁴¹

It may have been admiration for this independent woman, this *apostola apostolorum*, as Hugh calls her, that gave Yvette her ideas. She may then have drawn additional inspiration from the priest Lambert li Bèges, who precisely in the years around 1170 was propagating an active apostolic life, complete with pastoral care and mutual exhortation, for the common faithful. Huy was one of the places where Lambert preached. Even if we no longer consider him the founder of the “beguine order,” he remains the recalcitrant priest who inspired many laypersons, especially women. He would quote from the Bible, urging them to make use of their talents, “as every human hath received grace, ministering the same one to another; as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (I Pet. 4: 10). In Liège, too, in Lambert’s own parish of St. Christophe, ordinary men and women practiced their Christian faith in this way, despite the great problems they encountered.⁴²

In the time before universities and other *studia generalia* widened the gender gap by profiling themselves as the standard institutes of higher learning and consistently excluding females, girls often seem to have enjoyed considerable education.⁴³ Of a good many religious women we are told that they had been to school. Some were brought to the beguine communities to be educated. When Ida of Nivelles fled to the beguines at the age of nine (1208/9), she took her psalter with her, which suggests that she could already read, and received further schooling from the beguines.⁴⁴ Mary of Oignies (d. 1213) was also literate, since she regularly read devotional writings with other women in her community. Her brother-in-law, who had joined the beguine community of Willambroux together with Mary and her husband, was a trained priest and able to do whatever teaching was desired.⁴⁵ Margaret of Ypres studied the Bible and Christian doctrine with her family in the home of her uncle, who was also a priest.⁴⁶ Christina the Astonishing must have received an excellent education despite her itinerant existence, for in her old age she demonstrated a knowledge of Latin and an ability to interpret Scripture.⁴⁷ The recluse with whom Thomas of Cantimpré maintained a spiritual friendship told him that as a child she had been too poor for ordinary schooling but that pious women in the town had given her a psalter and arranged for her to attend Sunday school (with a female teacher!).⁴⁸ Beatrice of Nazareth was sent to the beguines in Zoutleeuw for her education (1206) and from there went on to school

with the magisters in town.⁴⁹ Ida of Gorsleeuw attended the chapter school of St. Odulphus in Borgloon.⁵⁰ It was in Borgloon, seat of the county Loon, that the famous recluse Jutta lived enclosed in her anchorhold, where Christina the Astonishing joined her; the town was a center of learning, and the women apparently participated in its intellectual life. Eve, recluse of St. Martin in Liège, was well educated, even learned, and the circle of spiritual friends that formed around her came to speak with her and Juliana of Cornillon about matters of faith. The same was true of Lame Margaret of Magdeburg and Margaret of Ypres.

In view of her later display of knowledge, Yvette must also have enjoyed considerable education. It is not inconceivable that she wanted to continue on this path and become an apostle on the model of Mary Magdalene. If this was her aspiration, it was thwarted by the overriding interests of the family. Yet later in life she would discover that matrimony and widowhood provided a second and better chance to fulfill the longing of her youth. Through marriage she gained a new status in life, and widowhood ushered in another new phase: these legal metamorphoses were the first stages on her way to living sainthood. They would be completed by spiritual metamorphoses.⁵¹

A VOWESS IN THE CITY

Family interests and the constraints of the House also made themselves felt after the death of Yvette's husband. Her father wanted to force her into a second marriage, even though she had already produced two healthy sons (a third had died young). When the young widow stubbornly refused, he called on the bishop to help change her mind. The bishop did his best—apparently he, too, found it completely normal for Yvette to remarry despite the Church's official stand against second marriages!⁵² Once again we read no negative word about the marriage negotiations. This time, however, the bishop was persuaded by Yvette to take her side after she appeared before him and his prelates and solemnly declared that she had taken the widow's vow. He had her repeat the vow in public and consented to be her mentor and patron, a pledge he would conscientiously keep.⁵³

It appears that the personal will of a widow, in contrast to that of a young girl, carried a weight at least equal to that of the clan. Yvette apparently could now risk standing up for her own convictions; she

could take a firm stand against her family, even against the bishop and his prelates, without relying on any outside help. Yvette dared to resist, and her family dared to take this seriously. Evidently this was within the realm of possibilities at the time—quite different from the prospects in the time of Guibert's mother. From the rest of Yvette's life story we clearly see how people were indeed beginning to be receptive to personal wishes and desires, including those of women. A relative of her husband, possibly her brother-in-law, fell hopelessly in love with her but did not dare "to allow that heat to escape him which begins to glow all the more intensely when covered with ashes," Hugh tells us, because he knew that she did not want to remarry.⁵⁴ Especially touching in this story, which is told tastefully and with a feel for dramatic detail, is the portrayal of the suitor, who does his best to control himself and respect Yvette's feelings. He very likely had the law on his side, and he also worked hard to please Yvette and her children. This was in itself more than one could expect from an "upright man"; was he then still obliged to act with such restraint? Apparently he was, at least in certain circles. The episode shows—as does Yvette's struggle with the philandering priests—that a process of disciplining the passions was under way, that giving free rein to male lust was not (or no longer?) acceptable, and that the author and his circle considered this a positive development.

But most of all it shows that a person's own inclinations were beginning to count. In a commercial town like Huy, which had risen to greatness through the entrepreneurial spirit and personal initiative of its citizens, there was growing appreciation for individual responsibility and initiatives. The time of resignation and inertia was past. This was as true in matters of culture and religion as in the economic domain. Personal choices were beginning to carry a weight of their own, even for women. It was, in other words, less a penetration of Church dogmas, as scholars like Georges Duby argue (which brought better protection for women, whom Duby considered victims without a will of their own), than an unfolding of new social customs and traditions that took into account individual ambitions and personal choices. For women with character, this offered unprecedented opportunities.⁵⁵

During her marriage Yvette had already begun praying often, giving alms and performing other works of charity. At that time she experienced that God had dispelled her general weariness of life and turned her despair and hatred to good. Her life thus came under the sway of

the Holy Spirit. She felt she had become a new person. This was the first stage in her spiritual metamorphosis.⁵⁶

Following the death of her husband she took the next step on her spiritual journey by taking the widow's vow, first privately for herself, but when that did not protect her from attempts by her father to arrange another marriage for her, publicly as well. How we would like to have a glimpse of what exactly took place! From Hugh's account we can only conclude that the bishop recited a prayer over her and gave her the benediction. This was most likely the simple widow's blessing from the Romano-Germanic Pontifical that was incorporated into many later *ordinarii*.⁵⁷ That Yvette had higher aspirations would later become clear when she had herself ceremoniously bricked into the anchorage by the abbot of Orval and subsequently received her great vision.⁵⁸

After her public vow she continued on the path she had chosen, probably thinking that as a vowess she could successfully define her new life. But she failed to reckon with her family and with her own anxieties. For when she went to church at night to attend prayers, she—literally—saw monkeys and bears on her path, or the devil throwing stones. In the main church she encountered priests whom she would later see with her inner eye seducing pious women. Perhaps they had already attempted something of the sort with her, and for this reason she knew what was happening to other women. All this gave her nightmares. Besides, there was the brother-in-law who wanted to marry her. A woman on her own could not actually live a religious life—we see Odilia of Liège encountering exactly the same problems.⁵⁹

She also began to realize that she had committed a mortal sin in cursing her husband and undertook acts of penitence, including severe physical chastisement. But the guilt feelings remained. She gave more and more alms to the poor, and if she happened to have no money on hand, she gave them her linens and other household goods. This was not tolerated by her family. Afraid that she would squander the entire inheritance, especially that of the younger generation, her father took the children away from her and forced her to change her ways. After consultation with him she invested the children's property with traders in the city—only to realize later that this investing for interest, or usury, was possibly an even greater sin.⁶⁰ Gradually it became clear to her that she simply could not free herself from the confining bonds of the family as long as she shared their world. The honor of the House continued to weigh on her like lead: “by giving away the wealth she was at the

same time throwing away the honor of the family name.” For Yvette it was as difficult to live in the world as a vowess as it had been for Guibert’s mother.⁶¹

“THE SERVICE OF HIM FOR WHOM SERVING IS POWER”

For five years Yvette persevered in this life until her youngest child, aged six or seven, was old enough to leave home. By this time she herself was twenty-three. She then cut all ties with relatives and the town and went to live outside the city walls with the lepers, outcasts who had no part in society and all its intrigues, who were already dead in this life and paying for their sins as if they were in purgatory.⁶² Living with them, Yvette gave herself up to confession and penance, to self-abasement and self-abnegation. She filled her days with the most degrading activities imaginable, mingling with the lepers and smearing herself with their blood. Hugh comments that this was even more than one could expect of a man.⁶³ Her motive was not compassion—at no point in Hugh’s account is there any mention of love for the lepers, and once her penance is past, they disappear from the picture, even though Yvette remained in charge of them. What she wanted was to die to this world and to find an environment in which to live out this aspiration. It was a kind of ritual that she performed, a rite of guilt and penance, of sacrifice and abstinence, a purging that precedes reconciliation and transformation. I use “ritual” here in the Durkheimian sense, as it has also been used to interpret forms of modern anorexia. “Fasting is an expiation and a penance; but it is also a preparation for communion; it even confers positive virtues. This means that it may be understood, by the individual involved and by onlookers, as the ‘negative’ phase in a purity ritual which is an essential prelude to the ‘positive’ rite of initiation into the deeper mysteries of life and death.”⁶⁴ Yvette intended it as a way to complete the metamorphosis from the sinful female “animal” rejected by God to the new, pure, “spiritual” person she would become.

This spiritual metamorphosis was not without consequences. During her last years in the leprosarium Yvette began to turn back toward society. She received visitors and made such a compelling impression on them that they were reluctant to leave her company. Some of them left their ordinary life behind them and joined her there outside the walls, men as well as women. Yvette developed plans to replace the dilapidated

buildings with a large church and a well-built leprosarium. She raised enormous sums of money and saw to it that the poor colony of homeless grew into a respectable hospital. While she started out with no more than thirty pieces of silver, Hugh notes, at the end of her life there were new buildings, a new convent, and a beautiful new church served by three priests: "one can hardly imagine how that was possible."⁶⁵

She also received the gift of prophecy concerning her fellow citizens and brought her father to repentance.⁶⁶ The roles were now reversed. No longer did her father and the town determine her thoughts and actions; instead, she began to exert a decisive influence on them. This process would continue in the anchorhold, where her metamorphosis would be completed. It is as if she said *Nunc, coepi, sicque facta est haec mutatio dextrae Excelsi*, "only now am I really beginning, now that the metamorphosis has been accomplished by the hand of the Almighty."⁶⁷ No longer burdened by remorse about her past sins, she was now rightfully considered a prophetess.⁶⁸ Shortly thereafter she received her great vision described above. She underwent a form of *commendatio* into the hands of Christ himself. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries this was a paraliturgical ritual, which in its form harked back to the old deaconess ordination and widow's consecration. Mary took Yvette's hands and placed them in the hands of Christ, who received her in grace with a kiss from his mouth. Christ then entrusted her to his Mother with the same words he had used on the cross when entrusting Mary to his disciple John. Such rituals had a performative character for the medieval faithful, even if they were not sacramental or, as in this case, took place only in the mind.⁶⁹

Yvette now became the servant of Mary on earth. From extreme abstinence and asceticism she proceeded into a life of moderation—a move that required all of Hugh's persuasive powers to justify.⁷⁰

MISTRESS IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

As a beguine leader, Yvette transposed her earlier household responsibilities onto the spiritual plane. She actually performed the same two tasks as head of a religious community that she had as well-born lady of the House: she took charge of the (spiritual) education of her followers and in addition managed the property. Legally the municipal government was responsible for running the hospital, while spiritual leadership

rested with the secular chaplains under the authority of the dean of Huy, and later with a Premonstratensian prior and canons. But in reality Yvette was in charge, and this was accepted. It proved to be a step in the direction of her own emancipation, something she would never have achieved if she had entered a convent at an early age.

Marriage and household management were far from being insignificant detours on Yvette's way to sanctity. While she was still young, marriage was instrumental in giving her social independence, for as a widow she was *compos rerum*, in control of her own life and property. She could subsequently spiritualize and expand this domestic authority in the beguine community. We have no reason to believe that Yvette renounced her property; no mention is made of her taking such a step—nor, for that matter, of any other recluses doing so either. She did, however, live a life of total poverty. Whatever money she had was probably used to expand the leprosarium—and to pay off her son when he showed up at her window demanding his inheritance.

Besides, her experience in the household provided her with the tools needed to shape a community. Now she could profit from that in different circumstances: “she learned from the book of experience,” *rebus potius quam verbis edocta, prout in libro experientiae didicerat*.⁷¹ It was her training to serve the heavenly housewife, Mother Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth. Men and women then came to her to learn spiritual discipline, *disciplinis instituerentur*, and placed themselves under her direction.⁷² Just as in the early Church the ideal of the Roman *familia* headed by the paterfamilias served as a model for the Benedictine monastic family under the father abbot, the medieval household with the matron as the central figure provided the pattern for her religious community. This is certainly significant here, as we are dealing with one of the oldest beguine communities. As a guide for her spiritual household Yvette did not choose the Rule of Benedict but the informal “instructions,” the *Praeceptum*, of Augustine. This work contained very basic advice for communal life and was easily adjusted to other (female) circumstances. Augustine had originally intended his instructions for lay brothers who shared a house with him in Hippo, a group of men living in the city and serving the urban community of believers. He placed all emphasis on life in community—even the coats hanging on the coat rack belonged to no one in particular. He at the same time propagated discipline and asceticism within the limits of the possible; more important than the external way of life was internal morality. Hugh would quote this advice

verbatim in his *Life of Yvette*. Augustine also assigned a primarily organizational role to the community's spiritual leader rather than one invested with patriarchal authority, as Benedict prescribed.⁷³

Together with Augustine's *Ordo monasterii*, the *Præceptum* formed the rule of the Premonstratensians, to whose spiritual guidance Yvette was entrusted. Also known as the "Third Order of Augustine," it would be adopted elsewhere as well, for example in the leprosarium of Cornillon in Liège, where Juliana was prioress. The great advantage was that this gave the community the protection of canon law; the disadvantage was that it also came under the thumb of the Church.

AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

Despite the new lay confidence in commercial centers such as Huy, Yvette had not been able to persevere in the religious life at home. The clan mentality and family honor simply would not allow it. Like many other women, she felt compelled to break all ties with her family, including her sons, and take refuge in a separate community. The latter was also necessary because independent women ran the risk of falling into the hands of dishonorable men—especially priests.⁷⁴ It was a time when the Church officially enforced celibacy but in practice accepted that it would be beyond the capabilities of priests. As James Brundage states in his thorough study of marriage law: "some decretals of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century tolerated clerical fornication so long as it was discreet, directing prelates to take action only against notorious offenders. The legal writers treated this policy of selective enforcement as a dispensation from the full rigor of the law and thus achieved a precarious harmony between principles and practice."⁷⁵ From the perspective of the clergy this may have been a "precarious harmony," but women, married or unmarried, had to pay the price. The concubine of a priest once asked her confessor, who was unaware of her situation: "What happens to the mistresses of clerics?" Jokingly he replied: "They cannot be saved unless they are purified by the fire of a blazing oven." The woman took this literally and, after baking her bread, crept into the hot oven. At the moment of her death the people outside saw a shining white dove fly out of the chimney straight into heaven.⁷⁶ Of two women who were seduced by a priest in Huy, one ended up in purgatory and the other contracted leprosy, which was like purgatory to her during her lifetime.

This seems to me to be an important reason why so many holy women chose to live in a beguine convent or a leper colony. It was not in the first place a religious choice but a practical one, motivated by the need for a safe environment in which to live out their ideal of a life devoted to God.⁷⁷ Once they had opted for a life consecrated to God, as virgin, widow, or married woman, it was imperative that they choose a fitting location: their own home or, if that was not possible, a leper colony, a beguine convent, or—as we shall see below—an anchorhold. The secluded life in the cloister was no option for them, and an anchorhold offered many extras.

The Prophetess in the Anchorhold

THE RITE OF ENCLOSURE

After about ten years in the leprosarium, when Yvette was approximately thirty-three years old, a voice in a heavenly vision told her: “Your sins are forgiven if you continue to keep watch over yourself from now on.”⁷⁸ Her penance was completed, and soon thereafter Yvette had herself enclosed. That was in 1191, and Abbot Remigius of Orval performed the ceremony. Actually Yvette, finding her way through harsh experience during her years in the leper colony, underwent a ritualized death of sorts and a transition to a new life, her personal *rite de passage*. For later living recluses this would be enacted symbolically (and publicly) in the enclosure ceremony. The rite must have originated around Yvette’s time. An early form of it appears in a French manuscript from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and detailed descriptions can be found in a few late medieval texts from the Low Countries.⁷⁹ Its essential feature was the forgiveness of all the sins of the person about to be enclosed, a ritual death and burial, and the beginning of a new life in the anchorhold, beyond earthly sinfulness. The ceremony consisted of three parts: a mass, a burial, and the actual enclosure in the anchorhold. First, during a solemn mass, the recluse was freed from all her sins, released from the sinful world of humanity.⁸⁰ Holding a crucifix, she then joined a procession to her anchorhold, accompanied by the singing of psalms and prayers from the burial ritual. She reenacted Christ’s walk to Golgotha and enacted her own ritual death; on arriving in the anchorhold, she sang *Haec requies mea in seculum seculi* while the celebrant bricked up

the entrance. The recluse was now dead to the world. The ceremony was concluded with the reading of a few more psalms and the prophecy of Zacharias: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people. . . . And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us."⁸¹

The faithful, for whom such a ceremony had performative power, here saw an earthly and sinful woman transformed into a holy prophetess. Already during her lifetime she had left earthly existence behind to share in the life of angels. From her anchorhold she prepared the way for God to give her fellow believers "knowledge of salvation . . . by the remission of their sins." There she acquired a voice, like Zacharias himself, who had been struck dumb because of his unbelief and regained his ability to speak at the moment he prophesied. By implication women, who owing to their inferior and sinful position had no voice in society, were invested with an office and acquired a voice in the community through their enclosure in an anchorhold.

In the trial-and-error process of her own life, Yvette had anticipated this rite and visibly lived it out. It took her fifteen years to develop from a sinful woman of this world to a holy prophet of the other world. For later anchoresses, the experience of the performative ritual would suffice. But then, too, the solemn enclosure did not lend them any status recognized in canon law. Recluses did not acquire clerical status or join the second order of monastics. Instead, they became prophetesses lifted out of institutional structures.

THE ANCHORHOLD

The anchorholds in which recluses lived were not, as scholars often assume, hermetically closed cells. From the life story of Yvette we know that she lived together with a young anchoress on the west side of the lepers' chapel in a two-story structure, adjacent to a second anchorhold that housed a third recluse. She lived on the upper floor, which gave her the privacy she needed; the young recluse lived below and received the visitors. Also part of her household were her old nurse and one or another recluse in training. Even though her anchorhold was bricked

shut and her confessor had to break open the (outer?) wall in order to hear her deathbed confession, her servants seem to have been able to go in and out freely. Yvette also, at least in her visions, walked from the anchorhold to the choir of the church. I infer from this that there was an opening in the inner wall leading into the church. The bricking shut (on the outside?) was then a ritual act that symbolized the nature of the anchoritic life, namely death to the outside world, and not an actual immurement, since the way into the church remained open. When Yvette was not yet officially enclosed but already living in the anchorhold, she once received a vision that caused her to run outside in ecstasy: at that point the outer door was apparently still open.⁸²

We have more information about the anchorhold of Eve of St. Martin. We hear that Juliana was a regular guest in her cell, at times even for longer periods; that the two women sang the hours together at a small altar; that Juliana at times experienced a mystical rapture while lying in bed on the upper floor (here, too, there were two levels). On one occasion she rushed down the stairs and wanted to “fly through the window” into the church.⁸³ If this anchorhold had the same architecture as the one in Eberhardtsklausen in the Eifel, we can picture exactly what the hagiographer is describing.⁸⁴ There a few steps lead to a high door connecting the cell to the interior of the church; from inside the church it resembles a large window. In fifteenth-century Utrecht a recluse also requested permission to have a door built in her anchorhold a few steps above the ground.⁸⁵ And the sixteenth-century *Ordinances* of the anchorhold in Vught mention a lock on the inner door.⁸⁶ In Eberhardtsklausen the cell’s outer wall bordering the churchyard has only a window through which the anchorite could communicate with the outside world. But if he wished he could go out or admit visitors through the church. I suspect that the anchorholds of Eve and Yvette, and possibly many other recluses, were built like this. Even the proverbial black curtain was missing. When Juliana fled from her pursuers into the anchorhold, Eve urged her to put on a veil: otherwise the villains might recognize her through the window!⁸⁷ Compared to the average citizen of the time, recluses lived quite comfortably. At least they had “a room of their own.”

The anchorhold was considered a sacred spot, a little corner of heaven on earth. In the spiritual theology of the twelfth century, recluses received unexpected support for their beliefs. William of St. Thierry stated in his *Golden Letter*, a work written after he had spent a few weeks

at the Chartreuse of Mont-Dieu, that "man's one authentic desire is union with God, that the stages of man's growth inevitably lead him to greater and greater solitude, and that this solitude is most perfectly expressed in the vocation of the hermit."⁸⁸ According to William, the anchoritic existence was the ultimate path to God. Only the anchorhold offered true stillness, making a person free, truly free for God and the inspirations of his Spirit: *Vacare Deo, frui Deo*. In an anchorhold, a *cella*, a word that for him was related to *celum*, heaven, angels lived; it was *terra sancta et locus sanctus*, holy ground. This was exactly how the recluses viewed their anchorholds.⁸⁹

MEDIATRIX

In the last part of the *Vita*, Hugh describes how Yvette began to feel responsible for the moral and religious level of life not only in her own community but in the entire town. I assume that this was also the last stage of her life, her phase as a wise old woman. In any case, she took a firm stand against the chapter of Notre Dame after it had been reorganized and placed under a dean.⁹⁰ This was in 1209, when Yvette was past fifty and thus more than satisfied the age criterion for socially active women.

All the evidence points to an exceptional position enjoyed by Yvette in the seclusion of her cell. On the plane of discipline and ethics, the Church and the faithful accepted her rather far-reaching claims without much of a problem. The same holds true for other *mulieres religiosae*. Actually, the Church had little choice. Reform-minded clerics like James of Vitry, Thomas of Cantimpré, and John of Liroux were striving for the same goals as these women: a disciplined clergy and a greater religious commitment among the laity. But in contrast to the charismatic women, these clerics could often accomplish little. In this time of "inner Christianization," when the faith was first taking root in everyday life and the doctrine itself was still evolving, respect for the priesthood and the teachings of the Church could not yet be taken for granted. Belief in priestly power and the indispensable mediating role of the Church had yet to be fully instilled in the ordinary faithful. Good will for the old guard was absent in any case, but even the well-intentioned reformers had little influence on people who attached no importance to their admonitions. While they could claim the power of the Word and the

Sacrament as priests, such power was only effective for those who believed in it. Those who did not go to confession or brushed aside the words of a priest, those who “ate judgment unto themselves” by going to communion with an unclean conscience, were not easy to deal with. Charismatic leaders like Yvette, however, endowed as they were with prophetic gifts, did have effective power. Yvette saw which people were eating judgment unto themselves; she saw the devils gloating above their heads. This made her a formidable ally of the clergy.⁹¹

But the recluses wanted more than to support the reform-minded clergy. With the authority they had acquired, they compelled the wayward to confession and remorse. With their prayers on behalf of sinners, they mediated forgiveness of sin. This is why Hugh of Floreffe calls Yvette *mediatrix*, mediator. It is precisely the same term used to describe the power of the priest and the role of Mary: “this woman . . . who now reigns with God in heaven . . . was so close to Him on earth, that He often confided the secret counsels of heaven to her, using her, so to speak as the *mediatrix* between heaven and earth, visible and invisible, God and man, for the correction of many.”⁹² Hugh does not use the term because he believed that Yvette had at her disposal the means of grace in the same way that a priest did, but because she could prevail upon Christ to forgive sins by talking with the faithful and praying for them. The effect was the same.

Anselm was the first person to apply the word *mediatrix* to Mary, and Guibert followed his example. Guibert’s mother had placed herself in the service of *Maria Mediatrix*, and something of Mary’s power had radiated out onto her. We now see Hugh also using the term for the servant herself, thus implicitly ascribing to Yvette a quasi-priestly function.

The conclusion must be that women like Yvette, even though they lacked the institutional power and authority to call their fellow human beings to account, did possess the moral and charismatic authority to do so. This gave them full scope to assume functions that would later be the exclusive domain of the clergy. And they could justify this by appealing to the theologically defined role of Mary in the process of salvation.

COADIUTRIX

Yvette therefore played a role that went far beyond what was usually permitted for women. But it appears that she had even higher aspirations.

Following her first great vision, when Christ entrusted her to his mother, Yvette seems to have found a second role model in the apostle John. She laid her head on Christ's breast as John does in medieval sculpture, and it was John who initiated her into the liturgy of the Eucharist. When she at one point longed to receive communion and the priest on duty refused her (because, as it turned out later, he had just visited a prostitute), John invited her in a dream to celebrate mass with him. She was allowed to stand beside him and to observe how he broke the bread—something that ordinary believers never saw and that she also claimed never to have seen before—and offered it to her. She was permitted “to stand by him”—*coadesse*. The word has a ring of supporting or assisting, of having a part in the celebration, and thus of priestly dignity.⁹³

Elsewhere we read that after the conversion of her son Yvette broke bread with him and gave thanks.⁹⁴ It appears that she celebrated the agape meal with him in a way reminiscent of the deaconesses of the early Church. The visionary ordination she had received from Christ appears to have meant more than merely a symbolic gesture of encouragement. We know that beginning in Carolingian times there had been a revival of the old practice of women being allowed in the choir, of their serving as acolyte or even as co-celebrant at the altar, of women who performed the tasks of a deaconess and were responsible for the altar plates. An earlier recluse, Wiborada of St. Gall in present-day Switzerland (d. 926), is described by a contemporary hagiographer as being in charge of the altar plates.⁹⁵ She celebrated agape meals and broke bread with women, old diaconal tasks that had been officially abolished centuries before. Because such practices were forbidden by canon law, scholars are inclined to interpret anecdotes like these away. But lived Christianity was more than official Church teaching. I consider it likely that gifted women like Wiborada and Yvette, women who played a leading role in the community of the faithful, actually celebrated agape meals with people who belonged to their clientele and who had requested their intercessory prayers. In addition, they may have served in the choir during the celebration of the Eucharist by authorized priests. Pope Gregory IX, for example, gave Agnes of Prague permission to attend mass in the choir five times per year. And Church statutes from Brabant note that, contrary to the rules, hospice sisters and beguines from Herentals served at the altar, *ministrant altari*.⁹⁶ We read similar things about Juliana and Eve of Liège. These are examples from various periods and regions, with different implications in terms

of canon law, but they all point in the direction of religious practice that was considered orthodox despite the flagrant violation of normative Church law.⁹⁷

Through her metamorphosis into a new, spiritual person, Yvette considered herself freed from the limitations that applied to her as woman. She had cast off old sin and the negative features of womanhood. During her long years of extreme asceticism and abstinence she may have lost the outer signs of womanhood as well, her breasts and menstruation.⁹⁸ She had proven that she could achieve more than could be expected of a right-minded priest. What was then to prevent her from performing other priestly tasks as well?

Metamorphoses Again

In the course of her life Yvette underwent a series of metamorphoses, changes in social status that were complemented by spiritual transformations. She experimented with various forms of a life consecrated to God—a vowess at home with the children, a living dead person among the lepers, an enclosed old woman. She tried out various liturgical and symbolic forms, partly in reality (widow's blessing and enclosure) and partly in the imaginary world of dreams and visions (general forgiveness of sins; *commendatio* to Mary; assisting with the mass). It was mainly practical obstacles that prompted her to flee into the reclusive life. Only in the anchorhold did she find the inner peace and support that enabled her to realize her calling. There she entered a completely new life—in a sense, only then was she truly born, this time not as a person of the female sex with all the accompanying limitations but as a spiritual human being, a *vir*. She finally entered the freedom she had longed for since childhood.⁹⁹

In her actual life Yvette lived out her own theological teachings. She stood in close relation to Christ the King and his Mother, Queen and Mistress of the Christian Household, to whom she had been entrusted. Mary, through her motherhood, had played a part in Christ's humanity, but after her assumption she also participated in his divinity, for they shared the same flesh and blood. In heaven, together with God the Father, they formed the *consortium regni*. Mary had a part in the power of Christ the King, her Lord and Son. As a mother, Yvette in turn shared in Mary's power. She, too, was assigned tasks in the Christian

Household, as Mary's earthly lady-in-waiting, and thus also a share in the work of Christ. As befitted a good servant of the Queen, she helped manage her earthly household, the Church. Her special assignment, as she saw it, was to oversee the household staff, the clergy and particularly the chapter of Our Lady in Huy, and to kindle new moral fervor in the inhabitants of Christendom, in this case the faithful of Huy. Her prophetic gifts and her mystical contacts with Christ and his Mother supplied her with information as well as the necessary charisma. She did not consider herself a professional like an ordained priest, nor did she claim the prerogatives attached to that office; she was simply an "officer" in the employ of Mary. She prodded and guided, and if the professionals happened to be absent (or totally incompetent), she was prepared to take over temporarily.

She was well educated also in matters of liturgy. She could therefore function as an intermediary between the Church and the illiterate faithful. Men and women from the town, but also young monks, visited her regularly. She helped shape their spiritual lives and they became so attached to her that they found it hard to leave. Like some other *mulieres religiosae*, she showed that women, if they were themselves well educated, could become the focal point of small communities, sects in the positive sense of the word. Robert Moore rightly ascribes to such circuits of informal but intense transmission of knowledge and faith a "community-forming" force.¹⁰⁰ In the following chapters we shall see that Eve, the recluse of St. Martin in Liège, also had such a circle of friends; and for Lame Margaret of Magdeburg this was in fact the essence of her life as an anchoress.

In my search for the historical Yvette—and not the saint of Counter-Reformation Catholicism—I have asked how a girl from a prominent Huy family could grow into a woman of great authority, inquiring into her motives to the extent that they can be ferreted out from her *Vita*. The woman I have discovered is the polar opposite of the saint she is thought to have been in pious circles. She was not the mystical bride of Christ who pines away in the seclusion of her cell, nor was she the saint who attracted believers to her grave after death. She is instead a historical figure who owes her significance to her historical agency. That significance can best be summed up as "the female counterpart of the priest." Accustomed as we are to the ordained priesthood of the modern age and the key powers ascribed to it, we tend to think that the medieval

priest must also have wielded genuine power while the pious women possessed charismatic authority at most. But how much more genuine, in the sense of compelling, was priestly authority in reality? The effectiveness of both depended on persuasive power. And on this point the anchoresses had a distinct advantage over the clergy with its many failings. In the transitional period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the power of the holy woman in the anchorhold, who had been illuminated by God himself, appears to have been considerably more effective than that of the priest ordained by the Church.

Juliana of Cornillon, Church Reform, and the Corpus Christi Feast

JULIANA OF CORNILLON was a bookish sort of person.¹ She could usually be found in a quiet corner, devoting herself to study and contemplation. *Semper meditativa erat*, her biographer tells us: she was always meditating. As a child she had her own little oratory where she could find solitude. As an adult she lived separately from her fellow sisters, and her last years were spent in an anchorhold.

Juliana had learned to read and write at an early age. She could recite from memory the Psalter and the basic texts of the Christian faith. As an adolescent she worked her way through the entire Bible, both in French and in Latin, as well as a number of writings of Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux. Of the latter she knew a good many sermons by heart, particularly his last series preached on the Song of Songs. While absorbed in these activities, she forgot her sex and her age.² If Jean Leclercq had included women in his study of monastic erudition, he could have presented Juliana as a prime example of his *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*.

This woman dedicated her entire active life to realizing her ideal of restoring the true community of believers by introducing the Feast of Corpus Christi. "Ever since her early youth this festival dominated all her thoughts and feelings; it occupied her heart and her spirit more than any words can express," we read in her *Vita*.³ As a young adult she had a vision of a full but not perfectly round moon, sign of the universal but still imperfect Church. Christ explained to her that the Church was lacking a feast day, the special celebration of the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Juliana devoted years of thought to formulating a theology and working out a complete liturgy for this festival, the office *Animarum cibus*. She did not live to see her dream fulfilled.

Juliana was not an outgoing person. Despite the support of scholars

and prelates she repeatedly managed to work herself into problems and ended her life in self-imposed exile, far from the spot where the festival would take root, the collegiate Church of St. Martin in Liège. In this respect she was the opposite of her confidante Eve, the recluse of St. Martin. As long as Juliana was campaigning for the festival, Eve was her help and stay as well as her go-between with the Church authorities. After Juliana gave up, disheartened, Eve continued the struggle on her own, and she was the one who in 1251 saw her efforts rewarded when the papal legate Hugh of St. Cher (Hugo de Sancto Caro) celebrated the great Corpus Christi Mass in Liège, in her own Church of St. Martin. In 1264, when Pope Urban IV, the former archdeacon of Liège and a great proponent of the feast, announced the universal celebration of the festival, he bestowed on Eve the exceptional honor of receiving a solemn papal bull from his hand: "Be of good cheer, for Almighty God has granted your heart the fulfillment of its deepest wish; be of good cheer, for your eyes have seen the salvation . . ."²⁴

Central Themes

This chapter and the following one will focus on three pivotal problems. First, there is the question of Juliana's failure versus Eve's success in propagating the Feast of the Sacrament. The recluse who had turned her back on the world proved to be a more successful propagandist than Juliana, who had never forsworn the world and who, as prioress of a leading convent, had even held an influential position in Liège. How can we explain this? Was it merely a matter of character—which undoubtedly did play a role? Or were there other factors as well? Since I intend to show that Eve succeeded mainly because she operated from an anchorhold while Juliana had to do without that cover, it is a question that touches on the heart of this book: why is it that so many women opted to live in an anchorhold, a choice that seems so bizarre to us today? Why did they not simply stay at home and serve their fellow believers from their usual social position? Or why did they not enter a cloister, the alternative clearly favored by the Church? What did the anchorhold offer them that they could not find elsewhere?

The second question concerns the relative fame of Juliana and Eve. Nowadays Juliana is by far the better known of the two. Prioress of one of the oldest and most prominent lepers' convents in the region, she belongs

to the “douze pairs” of the religious life.⁵ And thanks to Barbara Newman’s translation of her *Vita*, she is a familiar name in Anglo-American women’s studies.⁶ Large portions of her original office had been discovered earlier by the Benedictine Cyrille Lambot, but remarkably enough this did not lead to innovative studies of this part of her legacy.⁷ In stark contrast to Juliana’s fame is the oblivion surrounding Eve. Aside from the work of Lambot she does not appear in modern scholarship.

How different this was in earlier times. In the late Middle Ages it was Juliana who had been completely forgotten. Neither in Liège nor around her grave in Villers did any cult worth mentioning take root. Her name does not appear in the regional chronicles. Aegidius of Orval, for example, a thirteenth-century author from the Liège area, makes no mention of either Juliana or her feast day. Hocsem, in the fourteenth century, attributes the festival entirely to Eve, as does Jean d’Outremeuse—and the question is whether they were both completely wrong.⁸ When Eve died (some time after 1264), she was buried in the Church of St. Martin, and the chapel containing her ornate tomb was named in her honor. This became the focal point of the Feast of Corpus Christi. At the annual celebration the canons would walk in procession to her grave after the mass and pay her tribute.⁹ Eve’s chapel drew visitors right into early modern times, and when the church was demolished in the sixteenth century, care was taken to provide a new resting place for her bones. Bartholomeus Fisen, the seventeenth-century Liège scholar whose writings include the history of the Feast of Corpus Christi, still reports that the papal bull to Eve lay in the *tabularium* together with the Life written in French by Eve herself; since then both documents have disappeared.¹⁰ This continuing veneration, although strictly local, appears to have been a logical extension of the success Eve enjoyed during her lifetime.

The memory of Juliana, together with her *Vita*, lay hidden for centuries in Cornillon and was only revived in the fifteenth century, with the rise of scholarly hagiography, by Johannes Gielemans and others. It was Lambert Le Ruyte, himself prior of Cornillon, who at the end of the sixteenth century rediscovered the costly manuscript from ca. 1280 and sent it to a Paris printer. There it got lost for another four centuries until Lambot definitively brought it to light in 1946. In the meantime the Bollandists had published the Latin text on the basis of fifteenth-century manuscripts.¹¹ It was this version that Anglo-American women’s studies unearthed.

There is, then, a remarkable discrepancy between the modern age,

with its appreciation for Juliana and its lack of the same for Eve, and the Middle Ages, where the opposite was true. This in itself is an intriguing reversal that cannot be explained solely in terms of Juliana's problematic personality and her flight from Liège. Together with my first point of inquiry, namely why Eve, the recluse, could be so much more successful than the originator of the feast, Juliana herself, this question also leads us to the heart of the issue addressed in this book. Moreover, if it is true, as I maintain, that anchoresses were able to exercise a much greater influence than other religious women, the question arises why so little attention is paid to them in contemporary historiography. Why do they not occupy a much higher place on the historical agenda? This, too, requires explanation.

Third, in modern gender studies a great deal of attention is devoted to the relationship between devout women and their male entourage. A question widely explored is to what extent devout women may themselves have had a hand in the texts and ideas that medieval authors associate with them but that in many cases are known under the name of their male mentors.¹² This is also relevant to Juliana and Eve. Even more intriguing is to ask why great men felt so irresistibly drawn to these *mulieres sanctae*, for it was not only a matter of women seeking the support of learned clerics but of prelates in particular seeking out the women. James of Vitry lived for a number of years in the direct proximity of Mary of Oignies and learned from her, according to his own words, how to preach. Thomas of Cantimpré went to Lutgart of Tongeren and, like James of Vitry, wore a bone from the finger of his spiritual mother around his neck. Hugolinus of Ostia, Pope Gregory IX, was a frequent guest of Clare of Assisi in San Damiano; and Jacques Pantaleon, Pope Urban IV, treasured his memories of Eve and showed great concern for the Poor Clares. John Coakley and Aviad Kleinberg assume that they were primarily fascinated with the ecstatic religious experiences of these women while at the same time deeply aware of their own lack of a direct experience of God.¹³ They believe that the theologians were seeking new inspiration and new energy for themselves in these women—as if the women were “vessels full of grace,” the men moored at their side like ships that enter a harbor to replenish their supplies. They seemed to assign to the women the role of a passive medium.¹⁴ But the women in question were among the most intelligent and energetic of the entire Middle Ages. I therefore want to investigate whether there might not have been a more reciprocal cross-fertilization on the intellectual and spiritual plane. My question is whether these women only boosted the morale of their mentors or whether in

their contacts with the prelates they also contributed to the development of theology in the Church.

These, then, are my three pivotal problems. They all come down to the question of agency and religious change by women, or at least these women. The central themes of this book, explored in previous chapters, reappear here in a new setting and in sharper focus. While the first two chapters showed anchoresses active in the oral culture of medieval Christianity—including the liturgical forms sanctioning such agency—attention here is directed at anchoresses' contacts with Church leaders and the part they had in the development of theology and devotion, as well as the new place assigned to them in the Church organization. We will see that women were excluded from the hierarchical framework of the Church, but at the same time we will discover that, with God's help, they surprisingly found a way back into the Church as community of the holy. The old office of the deaconess was superseded by the charismatic agency of the prophetess, a role rooted in the oral and visual culture of medieval *Christianitas*. The gift of prophecy was of old one of the four charisms of the Church, as were teaching and the priesthood; it was considered a personal, noninstitutional, means of instruction.¹⁵ Because this charism was now explicitly defined in scholastic theology and inserted in Christian doctrine, prophets and prophetesses were assigned a place in the Church. They were given a code, as it were, with features of its own and a role that was bound to time and place: true prophetesses, for instance, received their inspiration during mass in the church building.

The role of prophetess thus became a good substitute for women who were barred from institutional offices. They, in fact, enjoyed a good many advantages connected with such offices. This was certainly true if they had an education comparable to that of officeholders and could hold their own against the theologians among them. "Illiterate" women therefore succeeded not only in fulfilling a pastoral role in the oral community but also in penetrating the theological discourse and making their own contribution to the development of Church doctrine. A remarkable point is that while both Juliana and Eve had access to the written circuit, Mary as source of inspiration appears to have receded in the background. These women were deeply devoted to the Mother of God, but she did not function as the legitimizing authority as she did for Guibert's mother, Yvette, and—as we shall see later—Lame Margaret. Finally, although Juliana received her revelations as a young woman and talked freely about them to all sorts of people, her hagiographer tells us that she only went public

with them after the age of forty. Even though she never married, she, too, had to wait until she had become a wise old matron.

The *Vita* and Its Authors

Aside from archival documents on the lepers' convent and, of course, the office of the Corpus Christi feast that Juliana authored, our knowledge of Juliana's life is drawn from her *Vita*, written shortly after her death (1258), between 1261 and 1264 during the pontificate of Urban IV. The hagiographer admits that he did not know Juliana personally but maintains that he has access to the notes of a very devout person, *unius valde religiosae persone*, generally identified as the recluse Eve.¹⁶ In addition he could rely on oral testimony of the same Eve; of Imena, abbess of Salzinnes, Juliana's spiritual guide in her later years away from Liège; and of fellow religious women and clerics in the city. Eve had handed over her text, written in French, to John of Lausanne, canon of St. Martin and patron of both Juliana and Eve. Although John had approved what she had written—apparently more than loose notes—he was of the opinion that the text did not do justice to the saintliness, the purity, the charity, and the zeal for justice of the virgin Juliana.¹⁷ In other words, he believed that Juliana deserved a full-fledged saint's Life. He accordingly commissioned our hagiographer to carry out this task. In the next chapter I shall go into greater detail about Eve's contribution to the text; here I will confine myself to the factual information that the anonymous author derived from her, and to his vision as a hagiographic writer.

The hagiographer must have been a highly competent theologian—the editor Delville calls him “une personne de grande culture théologique”—as well as a good stylist and an authority on the political situation in Liège. His description of the administrative structure of Cornillon is readily usable by any modern historian. I would therefore be more inclined to place him among the young Dominicans or the theology students from Paris than among the established canons of St. Martin, as is usually assumed.¹⁸ Presupposing the contemporary clerical concept of sanctity, he makes of the erudite woman Juliana a meek virgin martyr.¹⁹ He shows how she led a blameless life and possessed a pure spirit, how she practiced strict asceticism and was endowed with prophetic gifts, how she fought for justice and suffered a bloodless martyrdom. Unlike other hagiographers, however, he also pays attention to Juliana's inner life and

spiritual thought. For this he uses the text written by Eve and deeply regrets that he has nothing of the sort for the last years of Juliana's life, spent outside Liège.²⁰ Only in veiled terms does he mention Juliana's intellectual activities and involvement in Church politics, for this would not have fit the commonly accepted image of a pious virgin. As we shall see in the next chapter, he also minimizes Eve's role in active politics. But he does not seem to do real violence to the facts, for between the lines we still get an impression of the scope of the women's activities. Especially noteworthy is the way the author changes his tone in the course of the *Vita*. While the prologue remains factual, the epilogue contains a confession of his love for Juliana. He regrets that he never visited her, even though he could easily have done so. Now, when it is too late, he gives vent to his warm feelings.

The skillfully written Latin *Vita*, composed according to the rules for canonization and copied around 1280 into a costly manuscript with several miniatures, must have been intended as a plea for canonization. As with Mary of Oignies and Lutgart of Tongeren, nothing came of these efforts. The required cult did not take root, neither in Liège, where the woman who died in exile appears to have been forgotten, nor in the Cistercian abbey of Villers, where she was buried, even though the elevation of her bones invited veneration and the monks of Villers had a long tradition of admiration for religious women.²¹

Biography

JULIANA'S EARLY YEARS

Orphaned at a young age, Juliana and her sister Agnes, two wealthy girls whose family we know nothing about, were in 1197 entrusted to Cornillon, an institution founded by the citizens of Liège and located just outside the city gates. The girls brought with them a huge dowry, approximately 250 hectares of land, which placed the convent deeply in their debt.²² Considering that Juliana later enjoyed the protection of Abbess Imena of Loon, daughter of the count of Loon, and apparently also of Imena's stepbrother, the archbishop of Cologne, Conrad of Hochstaden, it is not inconceivable that her parents were members of this family or at least associated with it in some way.

At this time Cornillon was responsible for the care of lepers, and to

fulfill this function it was split up into four separate work units: one lepers' section for men and one for women, a convent of healthy sisters under a prioress, and one of healthy men under a prior who was also in charge of the entire institution. Its board of governors consisted of city dignitaries and episcopal representatives.²³ The healthy sections housed not only those who cared for the sick but also increasing numbers of devout laypersons who came to spend their old age there and young children who came for their education. An entire knightly family from Loon, for example, joined the community in 1190.²⁴ No vows were taken, and no rule was followed. Sapientia, the woman responsible for the upbringing of Juliana and her sister, was prioress and would later be succeeded by Juliana herself (1222). The latter's attempt to impose a strict ascetic lifestyle on the unruly youth of the community was a major cause of the problems she eventually faced.²⁵

The two girls were housed in the Boverie, the farmstead out in the fields. Because Juliana was such a studious girl, Sapientia ordered the building of her own private *oratorium*, a small chapel or cell where she could withdraw. After becoming prioress Juliana continued to live in the healthy air outside the convent.²⁶ At no point in her *Vita* do we encounter a leper. In her youth Juliana's ascetic zeal led her to attempt some humble manual labor, and she began milking the cows. She was immediately kicked, probably because she lacked all knowledge of milking.²⁷

Sapientia did her best to support the intelligent child, *non tam se nutrice quam unctione magistra*, "depending not on herself but on the unction [of the Holy Spirit] as a guide."²⁸ Juliana was able to fully exploit her intellectual gifts. Besides vernacular texts she studied patristic Latin literature and was brought into contact with important persons outside the convent.²⁹ This makes me wonder whether she might have enjoyed the same type of schooling as Beatrice of Nazareth, who as a half orphan was entrusted to beguines and from there went to be schooled by "the teachers of the liberal arts, who could provide greater depth in her scholarly studies."³⁰ In that case Juliana may have attended one of the excellent chapter schools in Liège and also received some liturgical training (in the nearby Cistercian convent perhaps) similar to that in Rameia which equipped Beatrice to practice the arts of writing and illumination. However that may be, Juliana was in contact with scholars and clerics from an early age.³¹

She also received many visitors. One of the people who often came to see her was the young Eve. The tie between the two became so close

that Juliana dared to confide more freely in her than in anyone else.³² There was a complete sense of mutual understanding. When Eve had herself enclosed at St. Martin, Juliana regularly came to see her, even staying overnight in her cell occasionally. Through Eve she came into contact with church reformers who frequented St. Martin or resided there. Boniface, for example, ex-bishop of Lausanne and friend of Bishop Robert of Thourotte, lived there for some time, as did John of Lausanne.³³ It is also through Eve that we hear of Juliana's mystical experiences.

A VISION OF THE IMPERFECT FULL MOON

Like Hadewych and other mystically endowed women, Juliana experienced her ecstasies primarily in church, in this case Eve's church, and during the celebration of the Eucharist. The hagiographer knows from Eve: "More than at any other moment it was at the hour of the sacrament of the altar that God showed her the hidden secrets of his wisdom and his will."³⁴ Most important of these was the Corpus Christi or Sacrament vision. The hagiographer devotes the largest part of the *Vita* to the consequences of this vision, the propaganda for introducing the new festival and the opposition to it. He does not, however, give a chronological account, nor does he try to place Juliana in the center of the action. He presents the matter, to the extent that it is possible, as a general issue. What he does include are Juliana's visions, inspired directly by God, and her eucharistic devotion. This is a clever tactic that allows him to smooth over what many of his contemporaries would have considered unthinkable, namely the part played by a woman in developing Church doctrine. But he does provide hints.

During the celebration of the Eucharist Juliana, as a young adult, probably around 1210–15, kept seeing a full moon with a small piece missing.³⁵ Since she must have been in the nave of the church looking toward the priest in the choir, we can imagine what she saw at the moment when the priest held up the host between his thumb and index finger, a custom new in her day: the host as a defective round form. Many women of that time concentrated their spirituality on the raised host. Some saw the infant Jesus descend into it, a vivid testimony to the belief that Christ was daily "incarnated" in the Eucharist as he once was in Mary. Other women miraculously saw the host as complete despite the fingers of the priest.³⁶

We can imagine that the incomplete host was for Juliana a symbol of

the Church of her day, in which she began to see more and more imperfections. The true Church that she envisioned from her reading of the Bible and the Church Fathers was not what she saw in the reality around her. She must have begun to wonder whether she should openly criticize this or try to do something about it. These were surely unsettling thoughts for a young woman of her time. The hagiographer reports that Juliana at first did not understand what the vision meant and that it made her fearful. She asked confidants to pray that God would stop sending it—in other words, she did not keep it completely to herself, as the author suggests elsewhere. In her discussions with teachers and possibly Church reformers Juliana probably felt confirmed in her criticism of the Church of her day.

Juliana then asked Christ to show her the hidden meaning of the vision—as we shall see, this was the second phase of a prophecy according to the scheme of Hugh of St. Cher. Christ revealed to her that for the sake of increasing faith in these last days and for the benefit of the elect he desired a great annual festival to celebrate the institution of the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. He added that Juliana should start preparing the feast and that she herself should make it known to the world.³⁷ With this commission from Christ, Juliana had to take action. The hagiographer—in the way he builds the story—does not present his holy woman as the simple conduit through which Christ channeled a message from above. He makes it clear that Juliana was in fact assigned to spend her entire adult life working to realize this festival. She dreaded the task, but there was no way out for her. When Juliana continued to hesitate and begged to have it left to *magni clerici*, she was told once again to undertake the task assigned to her herself, *ut negotium sibi iniunctum assumeret*, to start with the festival herself and promote it by means of the *humiles*, the humble faithful.³⁸ As later appears from her office, Juliana's overriding concern was the communal experience of all the faithful during mass, not just a new ritual performed by the clergy. Small wonder, then, that Christ (or she herself) did not want to leave it to clerics to institute the festival, since they took little interest in the feelings of the common believers and were increasingly preoccupied with their own *sacerdotium*, especially in the thirteenth century, when the separation of clergy and laity had become a fact.

Apparently Juliana's uneasiness with the Church of her day crystallized in the idea of a new liturgical feast and in her decision to give form to it herself. She began thinking out a theology and shaping a liturgy. At a time when women were excluded from all theological activity but had

acquired certain rights in the area of song and liturgy, this can be viewed as a clever move.³⁹ Since Mary of Oignies, according to her *Vita* by James of Vitry (completed ca. 1217), already knew about this feast, Juliana must have set to work on it immediately, while still a young woman. James's description of the feast includes the same biblical allusion as is used by our hagiographer in the 1260s: *Immisit in os meum canticum novum*, "And he hath put a new song in my mouth."⁴⁰ Juliana's idea must have been discussed in a rather wide circle from the start. Yet twenty years passed, the hagiographer tells us, before Juliana went public with it, around 1230–35. According to Hugh of St. Cher's definition, this was the third phase of prophecy. Juliana was then about forty years old, exactly the age at which women were given freer rein to become socially active. The hagiographer may well have adjusted the facts to fit the established pattern.⁴¹

YEARS OF STUDY

As Cottiaux rightly states in his biography of Juliana, she must have spent these twenty years working hard on the theology and the shaping of a liturgy.⁴² The final text with its wealth of quotations and allusions to authoritative texts testifies to a great deal of scholarly effort. It is not likely that Juliana did this completely on her own but rather in discussion with her fellow sisters and with reform-minded clerics who crossed her path. These were, of course, the canons of St. Martin, with whom she had come into contact through Eve, and also James of Vitry, a regular visitor in Liège and suffragan of the bishopric from 1226 to 1229. And there were certainly the four Dominicans mentioned by name in the *Vita*: Egidius, Johannes, and Gerardus, friars of the Liège convent, as well as Hugh of St. Cher, the renowned Paris theologian who would play such a decisive role in the whole history of Juliana and Eve and in Church reform in general. Some background information is therefore in order here.

In keeping with the dying wish of Bishop Hugh of Pierrepont, his successor, John of Eppes, founded a Dominican convent in Liège in 1229 for the explicit purpose of "teaching theology and spreading the Word of God in the entire bishopric."⁴³ Before long convents were founded in Louvain and Flanders as well. On special request of Pope Gregory IX and with the support of the bishop of Liège, the Dominicans set to work proclaiming the faith and combating heresy. The faithful would not soon forget the activities of the Dominican inquisitor Robert le Bougre in the

1230s. It is difficult to imagine that they were not discussed in the pivotal convent of the order in Paris. The central figure there was Hugh of St. Cher, the brilliant theologian who in 1225 had become regent master in theology at the University of Paris and shortly thereafter joined the Dominican order.⁴⁴ We have no documentary evidence that he actually came to Liège before 1240; but in Paris, too, he would have heard of the possible heresies, and his opinion must have been sought on the sensational activities of the holy women in Brabant-Liège. As in the time of James of Vitry—who would leave Paris to sit at the feet of Mary of Oignies—professors and students were fascinated by the developments in the Liège area. In the *Vita of Arnulf of Villers* a Paris landlady near Notre Dame is said to have heard so much about the holy Arnulf that she dispatched a student to him.⁴⁵ One of the go-betweens for the Dominicans was Thomas of Cantimpré. A spiritual guide of religious women, he in the 1230s worked on the *Life of Christina the Astonishing*, and after becoming a Dominican in 1234 went to study in Paris.⁴⁶ Another was Gerardus, the best known of the three Dominicans from Liège mentioned by name in the *Vita*. He has been identified as Gerard of Reims, author of *De Doctrina Cordis*, a treatise received with special enthusiasm in women's circles, and a number of sermons clearly influenced by Hugh of St. Cher.⁴⁷

Hugh was appointed provincial of his order in Francia before or in 1236 and in that capacity was expected to visit the Dominican convents in the area under his jurisdiction.⁴⁸ He in any case did so in Liège in 1240. In this function he was also the official evaluator of Juliana's liturgy, first of its theological content and later of the actual text.⁴⁹ Since the "Chancellor of Paris"—identifiable as the famous Philip the Chancellor, who died in 1236⁵⁰—served as a co-evaluator, this event could not have taken place any later than 1235–36. Appointed cardinal in 1244, Hugh would develop into the energetic advocate of the feast in the universal Church and a protector of religious women.⁵¹

As a young man in Paris Hugh began a lifelong friendship with his fellow student Jacques Pantaleon from Troyes, more familiar to us as archdeacon of Liège (1240/42–1247) and as Pope Urban IV (1261–64). During their steady climb in the Church hierarchy the two men remained in regular contact, planning strategies for the reform of the Church. Assigning a generous place to religious women was an important point on their agenda. The next chapter, on Eve, will devote considerable attention to Jacques Pantaleon and the Epilogue to the Church politics of both men. For now suffice it to say that these two prelates were men of great

stature. They had a sharp eye for the spiritual needs of their time, combined with vision and energy, and they were not afraid to take a stand. Personalities like theirs are rare in the history of the Church. Their efforts to bring about reform were driven by a fervent and affective spirituality that they shared with the women of Liège. These men of the Church and women of the Spirit were kindred spirits. It was an odd twist of fate that placed decisions about Juliana and Eve into the hands of precisely these prelates.

Returning to the story of the hagiographer, the theology for the feast was submitted to prominent theologians and prelates for evaluation. He names them all, from high to low and in that order (regardless of the phase in which they were involved): Jacques Pantaleon, the later pope Urban IV; Hugh of St. Cher, then provincial of the Dominicans; Guiard of Laon, then bishop of Cambrai but in 1237 chancellor of the University of Paris;⁵² the incumbent chancellor (Philip), who is not mentioned by name; the local Dominicans; and many others. Each one of them expressed agreement with her ideas.⁵³

Since the hagiographer deals with these consultations separately before describing the office itself, after his report that Juliana had worked on it for more than twenty years following her vision (1210–15), and considering that Philip the Chancellor died in 1236, I conclude that this consultation took place circa 1235 and not during the episcopate of Robert of Thourotte in the 1240s when the feast was approved. Hugh of St. Cher is explicitly called a provincial, while in references to his later activities the author always correctly uses the title he held at the moment, either cardinal or legate. All this indicates that the events should be placed before or in 1236, in the time that Hugh was professor in Paris and closely involved with the organization and expansion of the young Dominican order (and with thinking through his theology of the prophetic charism, as we will see presently).

THE WRITING OF THE OFFICE

Once a theology had been devised to provide the highly important justification for the feast, the theological ideas had to be translated into an actual office. There were liturgical texts to be written, melodies to be composed. This required skills of a very different kind; theological knowledge

alone was not enough. For such tasks *viri litterati, clerici excellentes*, Latin authors with literary gifts, were needed.⁵⁴ Again Juliana did not rely on *magni clerici* and their idiosyncrasies but sought support from a young cleric in her convent, John. This John would soon become prior of the entire community and would prove a devoted supporter of Juliana, even in times of trouble. Together they set to work. The hagiographer describes in detail how this went—it was, after all, not the least usual for a woman to compose an office, and the author of the *Vita* had to make the product appear as authoritative as possible. At the time he was writing, we must remember, the pope had not yet approved the festival, and his task was to remove as many doubts as possible. He writes: “The young brother and the virgin of Christ had agreed that he would start with writing and she with praying; in this way they would support each other. He worked through the many books of the saints and, like a diligent bee, made a collection of divine sayings.” On the basis of these texts he composed an office with antiphons, responsoria, hymns, and so on. “But what he produced he attributed to the prayer of the virgin of Christ rather than to his own diligence.” When he had written a section he presented it to Juliana with the words: “This is sent to you from above, my lady, read it and check whether corrections are needed in the chant or the text. Thanks to the wondrous knowledge with which she was imbued—[the study of Bernard’s *eloquia* would have done her no harm in this respect]—she performed this task with such sensitivity and insight that even the highest masters did not find it necessary to further refine what she had examined and corrected. And what Christ’s virgin had approved, he kept; and what the virgin found in need of correction, *she corrected herself* or left it to him to correct [*italics mine*].”

Even if the hagiographer suggests here that John wrote the actual text, he allows no room for doubt that Juliana is the intellectual author; he even says with so many words that Juliana was also responsible for the letter of the texts, because she corrected them with her own hand. This is a bold statement for a medieval hagiographer, so bold that the Bollandists omitted these words from their edition in the *Acta Sanctorum*.⁵⁵ Since medieval authors typically worked with the assistance of compilers and editors, my conclusion is that Juliana should be viewed as the author of the *Animarum cibis* office. What we see here, then, is an “illiterate” woman devising a sacramental theology and authoring an erudite and influential office—an office, as we shall see, that can bear comparison with work by the greatest theologian of the time, Thomas Aquinas. In view of

the pretensions and the scope of the feast, we can only marvel that a woman, with or without the support of others, achieved such a feat. According to my estimate, the liturgy was completed shortly before 1240.⁵⁶

The text had to be given the explicit approval of the responsible Church leaders. The hagiographer writes: "Before it was published it was once again shown to the *magni theologi* mentioned previously. Neither they nor the many other highly learned men who examined the text and the music could find any fault with it. Most of them were in fact astonished and racked their brains, wondering who could have composed such a good and great work."⁵⁷ But the task was not yet finished.

DISILLUSIONED

From the moment approval was given, all attention could be focused on introducing the festival with its accompanying office in the bishopric of Liège. The local prelates showed little enthusiasm, although such—I read between the lines—might have been expected. Had not Bishop Robert of Thourotte, the key figure here, been promoted by the pope in 1240 precisely because he, as a friend of the reform-minded Church leaders, could be relied on to support new initiatives like the Feast of Corpus Christi?⁵⁸ In any case, Juliana decided to set out on a promotional tour of several important centers, Cologne, Tongeren, and Maastricht, to pray to the saints there, we are told, but undoubtedly to urge their earthly representatives to put pressure on the Liège chapter.⁵⁹

Here we see once again the hagiographer's compositorial sleight of hand. He describes in detail Juliana's ecstasy in the Cologne cathedral but is completely silent about a putative visit she paid to the archbishop, Conrad of Hochstaden, brother of Imena, who we know gave protection to Juliana. Meeting this archbishop—and subsequently his relative, the dean of Maastricht—must have been the main reason for Juliana's trip, just as she very likely wanted to involve members of the chapter of Tongeren, such as its scholaster Renier. It can hardly be a coincidence that the only surviving manuscript of Juliana's office is from this chapter. Shortly thereafter Bishop Robert was fully persuaded and in 1246 recognized the festival in a solemn bull, the text of which has been preserved.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, he died before the feast could actually be instituted. This was all the more regrettable because his successor, Henry of Guelders, proved to be a fierce opponent of the feast and, as if that were not enough, a supporter

of the citizens who rejected Juliana's reforms in the convent.⁶¹ On a few occasions Juliana was threatened with physical harm, and she retreated to Namur (1247 or 1248). There she enjoyed the unfailing support of Abbess Imena of Salzinnes. During the last decade of her life she lived introverted in her own spirituality, first together with a small number of faithful followers, then the last few years alone in the anchorhold of Fosses. The ongoing struggle to realize the festival she left to others.

Shortly after the appearance of the *Vita*, Pope Urban IV recognized the Feast of Corpus Christi—very likely one of the reasons for writing the *Vita*—but did not adopt Juliana's office. Instead, Thomas Aquinas was commissioned to compose a new office. He made use of Juliana's text, which, thanks to the pope himself or otherwise to Cardinal Hugh of St. Cher, was available in Orvieto. The three men were together at the papal court.⁶²

Unavoidably, then, the question arises as to how Juliana's office compares to that of Thomas. What exactly did the woman from Liège hope to achieve in the Church of her day by introducing the festival? What were the issues that so occupied common theologians like her? And what did Thomas offer as an alternative? But there is a prior question. What could possibly have led powerful prelates to ascribe such authority to women like Juliana and Eve? How did these women come to speak with such an authoritative voice that even Aquinas could not ignore them? To answer these questions we have to make a digression to the masters of scholastic theology in Paris.

A Scholastic Debate

TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: THE EUCHARIST AND THE NATURE OF PROPHETIC KNOWLEDGE

In the years between 1220 and 1260, in the intellectual centers of northwestern Europe with Paris as the epicenter, two issues ranked high on the agenda of the scholastic masters: the question of the Eucharist and the nature of prophetic knowledge. The main lines of the Eucharist debate have long been known. Begun in a theological discussion between Paschasius and Ratramnus in Carolingian times, it flared into a major debate only with the controversy between Berengarius and Lanfranc in the eleventh century, when it was expounded in scholarly treatises by Alger of

Liège, Rupert of Deutz, also from Liège, and French theologians like Hugh of St. Victor and Peter Lombard. In the thirteenth century the Eucharist became a pivotal issue at the up-and-coming University of Paris.⁶³ Here the dogma of transubstantiation was refined. Pope Innocent III (Lothar of Segni), himself schooled in Paris and author of *De Sacro Altaris Mysteriorum Libri Sex*, a treatise from which Juliana would quote liberally, had the dogma officially adopted by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Its pastoral significance was then elaborated in sermons and devotional tracts. The various texts about the *Fruits of the Eucharist*, especially those of Guiard of Laon, whom we have previously encountered in connection with Juliana, are typical examples of this kind of literature.⁶⁴ But interest in the Eucharist extended far beyond the circle of Paris theologians. Gary Macy speaks of “a popular movement outside the realm of academic theology that forms a context for the insistence of certain theologians.”⁶⁵ While baptism had been the most important sacrament of the early Middle Ages, late medieval religious awareness crystallized around the celebration of the Eucharist.⁶⁶ It is no coincidence that the Feast of Corpus Christi made its appearance precisely at this time (ca. 1230) and in this area (northwestern Europe). But why was it a woman who came up with the idea?

The second focus of scholastic interest, the nature of prophetic knowledge, has attracted much less attention from modern scholars. It also appeared more suddenly on the agenda.⁶⁷ Peter Lombard had not treated the subject in his *Sententiae*, which meant that it was not a standard part of the curriculum taught by the magisters.⁶⁸ But in the period 1220 to 1260 it became an important question and the subject of a number of disputations, *Questiones disputate*, a form of scholastic debate tailor-made for dealing with urgent social issues. The scholastic manuscript Douai 434 from 1231–36 alone contains half a dozen *questiones* about prophecy.⁶⁹ It appears from this codex that Guiard of Laon—the same—took part in disputations on this question around 1230. His predecessor as chancellor, Philip the Chancellor—also the same—devoted a great deal of attention to the subject in his *De Prophetia* and his *Summa de Bono* (1230–35). But most important, the young Dominican and regent master in theology Hugh of St. Cher put the entire discussion on a new footing (1235–36). Since this same Hugh was the main evaluator of Juliana’s eucharistic theology and would become the vigorous propagator of her feast, it appears that the issue of prophecy and Juliana’s activities are intertwined.

What was new in Hugh’s ideas, and why is this important for Juliana

—and for the *mulieres religiosae* in general? The discussion included a great deal of scholastic hairsplitting over such questions as “Does the prophet look directly into the mirror of eternity or not?” But if I interpret its main thrust correctly, the Paris theologians were agonizing over three knotty problems. In response to these questions, Hugh formulated three important characteristics of true prophecy. First, Hugh deviates from other theologians by maintaining that prophecy is a *charisma*, a gift of God that is not intended for the receiver himself or herself but must be passed on to one’s fellow human beings. It is therefore not a *habitus*, like the faith intended for one’s own salvation, but a task assigned by God to make his will known to others; it serves *ad enonciandum aliis voluntatem Dei*.⁷⁰ A prophet, also a prophetess, has a social task. For women seeking a role to play in society, a new horizon was beckoning.

Second, prophecies are not uncreated images perceived directly in heaven; they are not, so to speak, messages in which the prophet or prophetess has no part, but created likenesses, *similitudines corporales*.⁷¹ According to Jean-Pierre Torrell, the great expert on the subject, this position is “une véritable originalité.”⁷² While hagiographers and other clerics like to describe their mystically gifted women as beside themselves in ecstasy, Hugh resolutely distances himself from such ideas. He differentiates various phases in prophecy: to begin with, there is the vision or manifestation given by God, then the hidden meaning of it, revealed by God, *revelatio eius quod latet sub imagine ostensa*, and finally the prophet’s proclamation to others. The recipient of the vision has to translate the (wordless) image into words and a comprehensible message for others. He or she is personally responsible for what is said.⁷³ We recognize here a distinction made by mystic women themselves. Hildegard of Bingen stated with the greatest possible emphasis that she received her visions with open eyes and a clear mind, and she distinguishes these images from the interpretation and study that followed them.⁷⁴ Juliana’s hagiographer similarly separates the eucharistic vision into three parts: first the image of the incomplete moon that Juliana saw, then the interpretation she received from Christ after long pleading, and finally the publicizing of it years later.⁷⁵ This, to my mind, is a fundamental point. To use the language of present-day politics, Hugh here created a win-win situation for both the inspired mystics and the concerned clergy. Men and women who are beside themselves cannot be held responsible for their “ravings.” But if they devote years of study to understand and explain the revelation they once received, they can be called to account. The great advantage for the

visionaries is that not only their message but also they themselves are taken seriously; they can be addressed on the matter of their interpretation. And the gain for theologians was that they were not required to swallow the visions as a dictate of God but could try to steer the interpretation, or if it was not to their liking, even forbid it.

The third characteristic proved troublesome for Hugh. Were prophecies, as Cassiodorus maintained, primarily predictions about the future, or was Gregory right in calling them hidden things that could pertain to the present as well as to the past or future? Hugh tended to think in terms of the future only.⁷⁶ But others, outside the scholastic circle, had long decided otherwise. Rupert of Deutz, for example, stated: “a prophecy is to be understood as pertaining to three times, the past, the present and the future.”⁷⁷ Caesarius of Heisterbach employed well-chosen exempla to show that prophetically acquired insights into biblical history should be accorded the same authority as learned Bible study.⁷⁸ All the “historical details” about the birth of Christ or the life of Mary, after all, we owe to the medieval prophets. Juliana’s hagiographer places himself in this tradition:

As the blessed Gregory proves in his exposition of the prophet Ezekiel, namely in his first sermon, prophecy pertains to the past, the present, and the future. As to the interpretation of the term *prophetia*, it must be in concordance with the three times to be rightly called prophetia [that is, speaking out (in advance)], not because it speaks of future things but because it brings hidden matters to light.

[Verum sicut evidenter probat beatus gregorius in expositione iezechielis prophete in prima videlicet omilia, preteritum presens et futurum tempus continet prophetia. Ut igitur expositio huius nominis prophetia, tribus hijs temporibus valeat convenire, recte dicitur prophetia: non quia dicit futura sed quia prodit occulta.]⁷⁹

In the following chapters of the *Vita* the hagiographer cites a whole list of exempla illustrating Juliana’s predictive gifts (future), as well as her insight into the inner life of others, her discernment of spirits (present), and her companionship with the apostles Peter and Paul, as if they had not been dead for twelve hundred years (past).

After Hugh, his younger fellow Dominican and protégé Thomas Aquinas would continue developing the ideas on prophecy and give them their definitive form.⁸⁰ Thomas wholeheartedly accepts the broad interpretation of prophecy. Any hidden knowledge can be revealed to all human beings, men and women alike, in the form of a prophecy. Since

the revealed wisdom was not intended only for the individual woman, the gift of the word had to be ascribed to her as well.⁸¹ On this last point he does build in a restriction, however: in view of their socially inferior position, women should ask men in their surroundings to speak for them. He also stipulates that the Church must in all cases try to distinguish true prophets from liars and ordinary fortunetellers. Hugh had provided him with the criteria: a prophet's behavior should be beyond reproach; the prophecy should not be limited to an incidental inspiration; and in the unlikely event that the prophet speaks from his/her own mind, s/he should immediately be corrected. The Franciscan contemporary of Thomas, Eustace of Arras, was more generous toward women and their public performance as prophetesses. In the quodlibet "If women can earn the crown of preaching and teaching," he concluded, referring to Old Testament prophetesses like Deborah, "frailty of sex is no impediment where there is sufficient purity of life. . . . Some elected and privileged women preach by instigation of the Holy Spirit and derive their authority, *autoritas*, from that Spirit." These were exactly the ideas affirmed by Juliana and especially Eve.⁸²

The consequences of this definition for well-educated women are abundantly clear. Even if the magisters at no point mention the *mulieres religiosae* and speak only about the *raptus* of Paul or the prophecies of Ezekiel, this in no way lessens the impact for them. Thanks to Hugh, learned statements by women could be viewed as serious theological insights, and the women themselves could be addressed on their ideas. They were no mere conduits through which God channeled his information but thoughtful Christians who were to be held responsible for their thought. Therefore, if their behavior conformed to that sketched by Hugh, female scholars would from then on have at their disposal a theologically acceptable medium by which to speak out on religious and even theological issues. If they phrased their ideas as insights from above—as prophecies, in other words—they could expect serious attention, at least from the reform-minded clerics. They thus acquired a standing that in certain respects was equal to that of theologians. This held true only for women of irreproachable behavior, which they could take care of themselves by going to live as recluses, for example. If women met this requirement, then Thomas's restriction about not going public themselves would no longer apply, certainly not in the eyes of the self-assured community of believers intent on deciding for themselves whom they would listen to.

FEMALE AGENCY

Looking back on the previous chapters and anticipating the conclusions in Chapter 7, we see here a shift in the use of titles and the qualifications for active religious women (recluses and others). The title deaconess and the liturgical consecration as vowess or ordination as deaconess recede to the background in favor of the qualification prophetess and the enclosure ritual of the recluse. The New Testament example of the deaconess Phoebe gives way to that of Anna the prophetess, the aged widow who lived many years in the temple awaiting the coming of the Lord. The focus shifts from social service to religious reflection and instruction. One cause of this change can be found in the rise of the deacon in the Latin church. As a cleric with an ordination that belonged to the higher orders he often gained pivotal positions in the diocesan administration. In Liège, for example, the canons of the powerful chapters were usually ordained deacons. Such positions were far beyond the reach of women. The female deacon consequently disappeared from the scene and the widow's blessing was absorbed into the general blessing for devout persons consecrated to God, laymen, and laywomen, whom Charles Miramon has called "donnés."⁸³

Women had to go in search of an alternative outside the ecclesiastical structure, and the qualification of prophetess offered itself for this purpose. While the charisma of the prophet was not institutionalized, it did enjoy great prestige owing to its biblical connotations. And already in the twelfth century visionary women like Hildegard of Bingen had given it a historical function. By describing prophecy as a charisma, Hugh now related it to the charismatic qualities of Christian leaders in the New Testament, their gifts of grace for preaching and teaching or discerning the spirits (1 Cor. 12: 4–11). Notwithstanding the diverging developments of these charismata in Church history and the definition of the *sacerdotium* in Church doctrine, in the living community of the faithful both priest and prophet had similar functions of teaching and guiding the faithful. For women, this was an attractive option.

At the same time, Hugh dissociated prophecy from ecstatic, uncontrolled mysticism. Prophecies were visionary images that demanded a great deal of thought and theological reflection. They were not of an essentially different quality from the "inspirations" or "insights" of the theologians themselves. Hugh's Paris colleague Philip the Chancellor gave a crystal-clear definition: "Mystical revelation, *revelatio*, is insight suddenly given by the Holy Spirit; prophecy, *prophetia*, is insight slowly cultivated by

God without industrious efforts of one's own; scholarly knowledge, *scientia*, is insight acquired by human study and by one's own strength; doctrine, *doctrina*, is insight received from another who teaches or holds an office."⁸⁴ In contrast to the scholastic pedants and their constant aggressive search for new knowledge, prophets and prophetesses were admitted to the true wisdom of God. In the next chapter we shall see how Eve, in exempla describing her own and Juliana's seeing of theological truths in heaven, typifies this form of visual erudition.

When women formulated their theological insights in keeping with this definition, they fit a pattern recognized by the theologians. As Rosalynn Voaden puts it, they then conformed to a "discourse," with the result that the magisters recognized what the women were saying and doing, that they gave them a place in their own thought, and formed an opinion about them. If the women abode by the rules, they acquired authority as well. In the time of John Gerson, the Church would even develop a kind of protocol to test supposed prophetesses. Joan of Arc underwent a test of this kind.⁸⁵ According to the description by the hagiographer, Juliana met the requirements of this discourse. And Eve, the source of his information, provided the underpinning with an incarnation theology in exemplum form.

In principle this prophetic discourse was open to every lay believer, man or woman, old or young, living in the world or enclosed in a cell. But in certain settings it was more easily recognizable than in others. And it was of vital importance that the prophetess in question was of irreproachable behavior. Juliana lived in circumstances and made statements that marked her as a dubious case, thus undermining her own position. Eve opted for the anchorhold and in this way placed herself *hors concours*. Untouchable and immune to human machinations, she then exploited her opportunities to the full. Anchoresses, we shall see, were in the best conceivable position to realize all the potential of the prophetic charisma. The enclosure ritual that came into fashion at this time (see the description in Chapter 3) graphically effectuated and symbolized their untouchable position. This made it possible for learned women to mingle in the circle of theologians and prelates.

Reading Torrell and the other experts on scholastic thought, we find no hint whatsoever as to why the Paris masters attacked the problem of prophecy and why Hugh thought it necessary to blaze a new trail. Explanations offer themselves more readily, however, if we remember that precisely in

these years Hugh was confronted with Juliana's theological ideas, just as Thomas of Cantimpré had to think about Christina the Astonishing, Guiard of Laon found himself in discussion with Lutgart of Tongeren, and James of Vitry, a former Paris master as well, had in preceding years been confronted with the visions of Mary of Oignies. Juliana was not just any pious woman who publicized a moral scandal in a prophecy or had a vision of a forgotten saint. She was a "theologian," who after years of study came with radically new theological insights and liturgical proposals. She wanted to be taken seriously by scholastic theologians. She submitted her proposals to them as "colleagues," and in doing so placed them in a state of alert. This prompted Hugh, who in his scholastic work had always been open to input by ordinary believers, to do some rethinking.⁸⁶ He went in search of a theological argument that would do justice to the contributions of Juliana and other learned women and found it in a new definition of the concept of prophecy. On the intellectual level, a form of discussion must have developed between the learned men in Paris and the learned women in Liège, not only about the ideas themselves, but also about the way in which women could go public with them. About what women could do to have their insights taken seriously by the Church. If Juliana engaged in the same sort of reflection as Hildegard of Bingen—and her hagiographer suggests as much—she may well have pointed the way for Hugh in his thinking about prophecy. It could also have been a matter of cross-fertilization, for the full moon of Juliana's vision was not something spectacularly new but a generally accepted metaphor for the Church.⁸⁷ Perhaps the line of thought pursued by Hugh and other theologians led Juliana to the well-considered use of this metaphor as a vision and a prophecy, because only in this form would her ideas stand a chance of being heard.

If, on the question of prophecy, learned women did make a contribution to scholastic thought, and if cross-fertilization did take place, what does this tell us about the other issue, that of the Eucharist, or more generally about the part played by women in the development of theology? If we follow Torrell, a great scholar and outstanding example of a contemporary historical theologian, we will view the theological debate as a sort of self-propelled discourse, with one scholar reacting to the statements of the other and in the process finding inspiration for new propositions. Was scholasticism a kind of tapestry created by generations of skilled weavers who wove into it the patterns and colors predetermined, as they saw

them, by the master designer, God himself? Studies by Roman Catholic theologians are often written in this vein. Or else we are led to assume that some magisters, such as Hugh and Guiard and James of Vitry, looked beyond the bounds of their small scholastic world and popularized their ideas in sermons and devotional tracts. In that case there is only one direction of influence, from the magister to the ordinary people, from high to low. The magisters then had to take care that their ideas came across properly and were not degraded into popular devotions and superstition. It is from this perspective that Miri Rubin and the Dutch scholar Charles Caspers treat eucharistic devotion. About her study Rubin maintains: "This book will follow the eucharistic world as it was designed and constructed in new ways by theologians, canonists and ecclesiastical administrators in the schools of Christendom, in monasteries and episcopal palaces from the eleventh, but mainly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."⁸⁸

We should not, however, rule out the possibility of one-way influence from the other direction, from low to high. As a cultural historian I see the self-assured communities of believers in the cities of Brabant and Liège and the collaboration of religious laypersons with their priests, with Lambert li Bèges in the parish of St. Christophe. These believers were assertive enough to identify their own desiderata, to formulate them in intelligible language, and to develop them further into what I prefer to term "common theology."

My own point of departure is that there was two-way traffic, that the scholastic theologians and the practitioners of common theology stimulated and influenced each other in an ongoing discussion; that there was continuous interaction between scholars and the ordinary faithful; and that there was a production of common theological texts. This last point implies that not only scholastic treatises but also saints' Lives, devotional tracts, and, in Juliana's case, liturgical texts can be studied as theological sources, with each genre formulating theological ideas in keeping with its distinctive features. The new dogmas in theology, the new forms of spirituality, and the new devotions can then be viewed as various products of this interaction. In modern scholarship they should therefore be studied together.

If we wish to work out this hypothesis in greater detail, we can start by comparing the two offices of the Corpus Christi feast at our disposal, the one authored by the common theologian Juliana, the other by the most famous of all scholastic masters, Thomas Aquinas himself.

The Office of Corpus Christi

TWO TEXTS AND TWO AUTHORS: JULIANA OF CORNILLON AND THOMAS AQUINAS

The text authored by Juliana has not survived in its original form. When the Bollandists of the seventeenth century went in search of it, they found only a few hymns and antiphons that they attributed to Juliana on the basis of their provenance, an antiphonary from St. Martin. They are included in an appendix of the *Acta Sanctorum*.⁸⁹ The office as such seemed to have been lost. Thanks to a fifteenth-century marginal note in Juliana's *Vita* in Rooclooster, however, it was known that the office must have been called *Animarum cibus*, after its opening words, and that in the fifteenth century it could still be found in Tongeren. Lambot's detective work led to the discovery of the antiphons and responsoria of this office, as well as the hymns and the sequence from the mass. In a manuscript in the Royal Library in The Hague he found a quire containing the sung parts of the office as used by the canons of Tongeren in the thirteenth century. Like St. Martin in Liège, the main church in Tongeren was a chapter church in which secular offices of this kind were sung. Later the quire was bound into a miscellany manuscript together with other liturgical booklets.⁹⁰

There could be no doubt that Lambot had discovered the core of the office. We have to remember that medieval liturgies were always cut into sections and preserved in separate quires, one for sung texts, another for prayers, and yet another for liturgical readings. With the antiphonary as his point of departure, and observing that Juliana apparently had a preference for quotations from scholarly theological works—a point the hagiographer also noted in the *Vita*—Lambot attempted a further reconstruction of the office. He found suitable prayers in a prayer book from the papal chapel in Avignon; the liturgy expert Pierre-Marie Gy would demonstrate that this was essentially a prayer book belonging to Pope Urban IV, the former archdeacon of Liège. That the prelate would take the prayers of this devout woman with him on his life's journey is a touching thought—and convincing evidence for the attribution.⁹¹ In another papal manuscript Lambot found two sets of liturgical readings; he attributed one to Juliana, the other to Thomas. Gy, however, who besides being a liturgy specialist is also a Dominican and an authority on Thomas, claims both sets for Thomas.⁹² He does so with good reason, I believe, and they will therefore not be discussed further here. Fortunately for us, Jean Cottiaux, the Liège canon who lived on the site of the former Cornillon and, after

Lambot, devoted his entire scholarly life to the legacy of Juliana, reminds us that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the long liturgical readings formed the least stable part of an office.⁹³ Authors tried to formulate their ideas succinctly in short antiphons and responsoria, expanding on them in the prayers and hymns, while the long readings often differed from one locality to another and were taken from whatever textual material was available on the spot. Even though celebrants of this time also improvised rather freely on set themes for the short elements of the liturgy, the parts sung together usually consisted of fixed written texts.⁹⁴ It is on these that I base my remarks.

The autograph of Thomas's liturgy has not survived, either.⁹⁵ What Lambot did find in a thirteenth-century manuscript in Paris was a complete office, including musical notation, a document that Gy believes may have been the official papal exemplar. Since then other scholars have brought to light thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts that include copies of the papal bull of 1264 instituting the Feast of Corpus Christi, together with an office of the feast. It is plausible, therefore, that this was the text corpus sent by Pope Urban IV to the bishops of the universal Church following the institution of the festival.⁹⁶ The readings contained in these manuscripts are the same as those that Lambot attributed, mistakenly therefore, to Juliana—actually no small compliment for this “uneducated” woman, even if unintentional.

A SHARED THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Having reconstructed the main parts of both Juliana's and Thomas's offices, we come to the question of what exactly the two authors were propagating within the context of liturgical praise. Surprisingly enough, they have the same basic theological foundation. Both of them designed a festival of the highest rank, a feast day of the same order as Easter and Pentecost, with a complete octave, with psalms borrowed from the Sunday repertoire, and with solemn, sung hymns. It was intended to mark the conclusion of the winter season just before the arrival of summer. Although it was celebrated on a weekday, it would nevertheless be a general holiday. The boldness of such a plan can hardly be overestimated.⁹⁷

Both Juliana and Thomas used the festival to clarify their theological view of the mass and the significance of the Eucharist.⁹⁸ An important motive for Juliana was that ordinary believers hardly knew what was going

on during mass and why it was crucial to their salvation to take communion. In her revelatory vision she was told that on Maundy Thursday, when the church commemorates the Last Supper, attention was too easily diverted by the foot washing and the memory of Christ's suffering. Moreover, a special feast day would compensate for any lack of devotion or negligence of believers during daily masses.⁹⁹ Although Thomas and the clergy were primarily interested in celebrating the institution of the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday, they recognized the objection that the liturgical drama dealt mainly with the foot washing and not with the Eucharist.

Juliana turned the antiphons and responsoria, that is, the short texts prefacing and concluding the pericopes from the Psalms and other books of the Bible, into genuine theological statements. She did so by including in them key passages from great theological works of the twelfth century. "Food for believing souls, *animarum cibus*: the wisdom of God places before us a meal of the flesh that he assumed; we are therefore invited to taste his divinity by eating the food of his humanity." These are the words of the opening antiphon, a clarion call taken from *De Sacro Altaris Mysteriorio* of Lothar of Segni (Pope Innocent III), who in turn was quoting the key sentence in the treatise *De Sacramento Corporis et Sanguinis Christi* by Hugh of St. Victor.¹⁰⁰ Thomas limited himself to short quotations from the Bible in his antiphons; he set forth his theology in the liturgical readings and in exceptionally long tropes in the mass. Some of Juliana's antiphons and prayers have meter but no rhyme—a stylistic feature usually credited to Thomas, but he was simply following Juliana's example.¹⁰¹ Both wrote long and rich sequences, a kind of hymns for the mass, a genre already on the decline in their time.¹⁰²

It should be remembered that Juliana was the first person in the history of the Church to systematically think through the content and meaning of the Eucharist for the purpose of a liturgical celebration. Many scholarly treatises on the mass and polemics about the altar sacrament had been written, of course, but there were no texts for a liturgy. Juliana had at her disposal the works of prescholastic thinkers such as Anselm of Laon, Rupert of Deutz, Hugh of St. Victor (she included a few quotations from the last two), and especially Alger of Liège, her main source, as well as early scholastics like Peter Lombard (whom she did not use), and Innocent III, her second great mine of quotations.¹⁰³ She also could have quoted from the first generation of true scholastic thinkers such as Guiard of Laon or Hugh of St. Cher but did not do so. What can be said of all these authors, however, is that they had produced learned discourse

but had not devised a plan or composed poetic texts for a liturgy with hours for a feast day and its octave. As we shall see below, Juliana showed great intelligence and insight in selecting material that fit her theological views. She evidently had a strong preference for the nonscholastic twelfth-century authors, the humanists whose work, according to Richard Southern, “reshaped European society, whereas the technically much more accomplished works of their successors have their place in histories of theology or philosophy, and only tangentially in the history of the development of European government and society.”¹⁰⁴ Juliana, in my opinion, consciously opted for these humanists and for the practical morality of the circle around Peter the Chanter. One of the members of this circle was Innocent III.¹⁰⁵

Both Juliana and Thomas conceived an office for use in a city church, a cathedral or a chapter church such as St. Martin, not a monastery or a convent church.¹⁰⁶ They envisioned a festival that the entire community of the faithful would celebrate together: it is no coincidence, then, that the Feast of Corpus Christi later evolved into a popular town festival. It was not envisioned as a feast for the clergy nor for the individual believer. Both of them felt an aversion to allegorical amplification, the highly individual meditation of the churchgoer, although it was a popular feature in their time. Ever since Amalarius of Metz in the ninth century, ordinary believers had been urged to use the occasion of the celebrant’s activities during mass for personal ponderings on the life of Jesus. The introit of the mass, for example, was supposed to set them thinking about the incarnation of Jesus, the raising of the chalice about the crucifixion, the setting down of the chalice about the deposition from the cross, and so forth.¹⁰⁷ Not the listening to the spoken word—which in their time had become incomprehensible gibberish¹⁰⁸—was recommended but personal devotional exercises. Beginning in the thirteenth century, psalters with their appended lay prayers and books of hours provided suitable material for such meditation. The popular *Lay Folks Mass-Books* also served this purpose. Juliana and Thomas wanted nothing to do with this. They wished to involve all the members of the community in the celebration, and it was Juliana’s intention to have them all communing. I do not rule out the possibility that Juliana arrived at her insights thanks to Hugh of St. Cher, who wrote an extremely sober, nonallegorical description of the mass.¹⁰⁹ Thomas, too, may have been influenced by his tutor Hugh.

Both ignore possible references to a spiritual communion. In Juliana’s case this omission is particularly striking. On the many occasions

when she experienced opposition from the local clergy she found consolation in an inward taking of communion.¹¹⁰ Moreover, as a great admirer of Augustine she would have repeatedly encountered his famous dictum *crede et manducasti*, “believe and thou hast eaten.” We might have expected her to incorporate this into her liturgy, but she did not do so. Her conception of the feast culminated in the actual communion. She wanted believers to consciously prepare themselves for this moment with a day of fasting.¹¹¹ It was in her spirit that Urban IV promised an indulgence to all believers who actually did go to communion. Thomas paid no attention to the preparation with fasting but did place great emphasis on the effect of the Sacrament on the communicant.¹¹²

DISTINCT MESSAGES

Both Juliana and Thomas stand in the orthodox tradition of the thirteenth century. Their aim is to celebrate the presence of Christ in the religious community and the imparting of his grace to the faithful.¹¹³ But within this general scheme the two liturgies diverge widely in their mood and message. Juliana envisions a grand and solemn festival in which believers gather together and confess their communion with God and one another, thus forging or confirming the bond of peace and love.¹¹⁴ She assigns no place to the priest as a separate actor in the drama; he is, in fact, almost written out of the liturgy, simply included in the “we, the faithful.”¹¹⁵ From her viewpoint as a layperson and a woman, this is understandable. Thomas, however, in keeping with his view of the *sacerdotium*, concentrates on the priestly celebrant. *Sacerdos in aeternum Christus* are his opening words, “Christ our high priest in eternity,” and the celebrant is his representative. “God chose to institute this Sacrifice [of the Mass] in such a way that he entrusted the ministration of it only to priests. To them it is permitted to partake [of the bread and wine] and to then distribute it to the others.”¹¹⁶ The celebrant comes first, the community of the faithful follow, and the individual believer disappears from sight.

Juliana loses herself in the joy of having Christ present. She knows her Lord is there in the sacrament.¹¹⁷ He is visibly, tangibly, even edibly present for the believer. She celebrates his presence as a prefiguration of his second coming and views the eucharistic meal as a foretaste of heavenly bliss. It is the joy of Easter that sings forth in the hymns from the Easter liturgy, an eschatological joy drawn into earthly reality. It is victory

over abandonment, gained by taking Christ at his word: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 20). He is right here, she sings, every day anew, *cotidie, cotidie*. And through his one-time sacrifice on the cross we may be present at the heavenly feast, again and again. The unbridgeable chasm between heaven and earth, time and eternity, the visible and the invisible world, is bridged in the joyous banquet: "by means of this heavenly feast we participate in the divine substance."¹¹⁸

Thomas's message is very different. He, too, recognizes the presence of Christ in spirit, but he in no way localizes this in the host. He, too, knows joy but keeps emphasizing the unknowable and incomprehensible nature of the divine:

Does it pass thy comprehending? / Faith, the law of sight transcending, / Leaps to things not understood. / Here, beneath these signs are hidden/ Priceless things, to sense forbidden; / Signs, not things are all we see.

[Quod non capis, quod non vides, / Animosa firmat fides / Praeter rerum ordinem. / Sub diversis speciebus, / Signum tantum, et non rebus, / Latent res eximiae.]¹¹⁹

While Urban IV in his founding bull *Transiturus* at first made unperturbed mention of the corporeal presence of the Savior in the Eucharist, he added a clause in the second version, probably on Thomas's urging: "we embrace this divinity in mind and spirit, we do not receive it in real presence."¹²⁰ *Latens deitas*, a hidden godhead—this is what Thomas preaches. That the believer could derive little comfort from this teaching was not a consideration for him. His first concern was to guarantee the purity of the doctrine and an unambiguous formulation. The mood he evokes is not one of jubilation and Easter but of the Passion Week and the crucifixion. He paraphrases the passion hymn *Pange lingua*, quotes the words of the Last Supper, and makes reference to the sacrificial death of Christ. He characterizes the essence of the festival in the prayer: "O God, who hast given us *a remembrance of Your suffering in the miracle of the sacrament*, make us, we pray you, to honor Thy mysteries of body and blood in such a way that we may experience the fruit of Thy reconciliation in ourselves."¹²¹ Juliana and Thomas both use the words bread and wine, the metaphors of food and drink, dozens of times. But for Juliana this is expressed in words like communal meal, heavenly banquet, *convivium*, *edulium*, *cena*, all denoting shared celebrations in the community. For Thomas the food is provisions for a journey, sustenance for the individual

believer. *Cena* he uses only in his reference to the Last Supper, and *convivium* comes to expression just once, at the very end of the festival, when he opens up the perspective of eschatological glory.¹²²

Thomas describes as minutely as possible what happens on the altar and what exactly a person is eating. At least a quarter of his liturgy is devoted to these questions. Juliana is not interested in technical details, which in her opinion only distract from the message of the occasion. The motives of Juliana and Thomas could be characterized, in their essence, as follows: How does it benefit us (believers)? asks Juliana and praises the Lord for what he offers; How does it harm us (priests)? is the concern of Thomas, who seeks cover in technical details.

Juliana actually devised a totally new festival. Following the annual letdown of Ascension Day, when she felt left behind and lonely as she watched her Lord ascend to heaven, and after the rather detached festival of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit seemed to settle mainly on the heads of apostles and priests, it was necessary, she believed, to have a grandiose, exuberant festival for the entire community of believers in which they could taste, touch, and grasp that Christ, their God and Lord, was present after all, here and now, every day anew, until the end of time. It was to be an outpouring of Christ himself into the hearts and lives of all the faithful. And it would constitute the apotheosis of the entire church year. Thomas was not interested in something new; at most he wanted a more detailed explication of something old, of the institution of the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday. The opening prayer each of the two chose for the mass is revealing: "Let us so celebrate on earth the bodily presence of Christ that we may look forward in joy to seeing his face in heaven," Juliana prays. This in contrast to the words of Thomas: "Let us so celebrate the memory of his suffering that we may taste the fruits of his atonement."¹²³

DIVERGENT TRADITIONS

Behind this discrepancy in mood and selection of texts lies a difference in theology. In his thought-provoking study "The Mass as a Social Institution," John Bossy contrasts two opposing views of the mass. In both of them mass is defined as the powerful sacrament through which Christ's grace flows to mankind. But in the one theology the mass is "a reparatory or satisfactory ritual in which was renewed or recapitulated the self-immolation of Christ atoning"; the mass as sacrifice, in other words, a

daily ritual performed by the priest for the sake of the Church and its faithful. In the other theology, “the mass completes what the pacifying sacrifice makes possible: the eucharistic eating whereby the Christian participates in communion, common union, the wholeness of Christ and of his church, the token of his entry into transcendent life”; the mass as a shared celebration and banquet.¹²⁴ Even if the one theology cannot do without the other in practice, it is clear that Thomas attaches much greater importance to the first, that of the sacrifice and the priest, and Juliana to the other, that of the banquet and the communion of believers.

These two views are, in turn, rooted in two theological traditions. Based on differing biblical interpretations, the two strands grew so far apart in the course of Church history that a schism resulted with the Reformation. The liturgy historian Enrico Mazza has shown that already in the New Testament the commemoration of the Last Supper took two different forms. All biblical authors think in typological terms, he maintains. They see in the event a type—in medieval Latin a *figura*—with prefigurations in the Old Testament (the Jewish Passover) and fulfillment in a later time. Luke (in Luke 22: 17–20) and to a lesser extent Paul see the bread and wine of the Last Supper on the historical (horizontal) plane as prefigurations of Christ’s suffering and death on the cross: “This is my body which is given for you.” But on the vertical plane they are viewed as harbingers of heavenly bliss: “as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor. 11: 26). Mazza elaborates: “The present time with its imminent darkness is thus already set in the light of the future, so that the image of the kingdom of God is made part of the last Supper.”¹²⁵ Juliana homed in on precisely this quotation and placed it at the beginning of her Corpus Christi liturgy. With Paul she emphasizes the banquet character of the Eucharist celebration, its communal dimension and eschatological perspective. In doing so she could fall back on the Church Fathers who had added a Neoplatonic twist by presenting the Eucharist as the visible, earthly realization of the invisible, heavenly type and by declaring that believers could, in the here and now, take part in the heavenly banquet.¹²⁶ It is more the fulfillment of a promise than the reminder of suffering.

Matthew and Mark, in contrast, place greater emphasis on the link between the Last Supper and the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus. The celebration of the Eucharist is for them a commemoration and representation of the Passion. It is not surprising, then, that Thomas places the words of Matthew 26: 26 at the beginning of his office. Nathan Mitchell

describes the essentially different character of this tradition as follows: "the table has become a tomb . . . ; the actions of eating and drinking have become part of the ritual drama in which Jesus once more dies and rises again. The change of genre, holy meal to ritual drama, symbolic action to dramatic allegory, implies a significant alteration of content, meaning, and interpretation."¹²⁷ The participants therefore play significantly different roles. Instead of table companions partaking in a banquet, there is a celebrant performing a liturgical drama in front of spectators. In a sermon presumably preached at the first celebration of the Corpus Christi feast in Orvieto in 1264, Thomas used the parable of the lord who prepared a "great supper" (Luke 14: 15–24) as an image of the Eucharist celebration. The *familiares* invited to his banquet were, he says, the religious and the clergy. When they failed to show up others were invited, the *cives et abiecti*, the lay and the poor, the maimed and the blind. And when there was still empty space at the table, unbelievers were called in as well. We find a liturgical echo of this in the matins hymn: "the Eucharist celebration is the sacrifice of Christ, whose office he wishes to assign only to priests. They take and eat the Lord, they serve Him to others, the poor, the slave, the lowly: "*O res mirabilis! Manducat Dominum / Pauper, servus et humilis.*"¹²⁸

The Eucharist controversy of the ninth and eleventh centuries, with its focus on the elements, culminated in a victory for the latter view, at least in scholastic theology. For Lombard and Innocent, Albert the Great and Thomas, the table is indeed a "tomb" and the Eucharist a "sacrifice." The priest performs the consecration—for which the term "transubstantiation" now makes its appearance—and the faithful can watch. The priest by himself accomplishes the work of salvation *in persona Christi*; he is the one entrusted with the power to do so.¹²⁹ The Anselmian doctrine of atonement acquires a liturgical application here. A direct connection is made between the daily "sacrifice" of the priest in the mass and the forgiveness of the daily sins of the faithful. Significantly, neither Juliana nor Thomas affirms this association. In a quotation taken from Alger, Juliana even omits the words *a peccatis nostris*, (freed) from our sins.¹³⁰ I shall return to this point later.

In scholastic theology the priest acquired "cultic independence from the community"; he took possession of the Sacrament.¹³¹ The theological basis for this was provided by the Gregorian Reform, with its separation of *sacerdotium* and laity. Juliana attempted to turn the tide, but in vain, as we shall see. As an aside, it can be noted that this development not only broke up the cultic community; it also endangered what Brian Stock terms

the “textual community.” There is no longer a self-evident collective in which priest and believers commune together and instruct each other. When ordinary believers are asking for instruction, as the faithful were in the thirteenth century, it can prove dangerous for the clergy if no response is forthcoming. Others, such as *mulieres religiosae* and friars of the mendicant orders, can then step in to fill the gap.

TWO DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS CULTURES

Spreading the net more widely, we find that these two traditions are rooted in two different ways of knowing and two distinct religious cultures, in short, two different ways of dealing with the divine in our human world. Juliana is an exponent of common theology; she found her inspiration in the spiritual world of the common faithful and was therefore expected to gain her knowledge from direct contact with the divine—regardless of how many scholarly books she may actually have studied. Thomas, as an exponent of learned theology, was expected to build on the scholastic tradition. He acquired his knowledge through the study of *authoritates*—although in practice he, too, experienced many an “inspiration” during nights of prayer in his cell. Juliana was considered to have no need of written texts; she saw in contemplation and learned by being present and observing—*Seeing Salvation*, to quote the title of a recent exhibition.¹³² When in a state of ecstasy, her hagiographer tells us, “she fixed her eyes on heaven”; he then goes on to describe what she saw there. Juliana was instructed through “the unction of the Holy Spirit,” *unctione magistra*, and saw with the “eyes of faith.” Thomas gained his knowledge through reasoning, in Juliana’s opinion a rather aggressive and disrespectful way of garnering divine knowledge.¹³³

These “eyes of faith” bring us to the religious culture of the thirteenth century, where Juliana’s spirituality had its roots. It is a strongly visual spirituality, tied to physical objects.¹³⁴ We can identify and summarize at least four characteristics: it was a highly place-bound religiosity, experienced within the four walls of the parish church; it was directed at Christ, God the Son, and his Mother, visibly present in the church; it was bound to the liturgical year; and it was experienced in community.

First, then, there is the bond with the parish church (or a convent church, if the faithful felt at home there). Familiar as we are with late medieval Passion devotion with its personal tint—especially after such

outstanding exhibitions as *The Art of Devotion*¹³⁵—we almost take it for granted that the religious experience in the thirteenth century was individual, domestic, and focused on the Passion story. This was not the case, however. Central to the piety of the common faithful was the local church edifice, in this time often rebuilt with the support of the entire community. Designed in the new Gothic style, these structures in themselves seemed to evoke exalted religious feelings. It was in this space that faith was experienced, both individually and collectively, and not at home. In the church building believers saw the history of salvation come to life before their inner eye, they met the saints in their images, and they had a foretaste of heavenly bliss. Outside the religious services they also liked to spend time there. In Liège people told the anecdote of Jordan of Saxony, the General of the Dominicans, who often spent hours lingering in the church, not to pray, he said, but to “keep the Lord company.” And God always rewarded him with a gift.¹³⁶ Yvette of Huy, while living in the city as a vowess, often got up before dawn to pray in the church. Other matrons did the same, each one of them likely prey for the devil and dishonorable priests.¹³⁷ Juliana went to the Church of St. Martin, where Eve lived, and there, not at home, she received many of her visions, often on feast days.

On one occasion, as she was preparing the *recluserium* altar with Eve, the latter opened her “Veronica,” her image of the True Face of Christ, whereupon Juliana “fixed her eyes on the image of the Savior” and immediately fell into a swoon. When Eve said, “Don’t be troubled, my lady, the suffering is long past,” Juliana was not in the least consoled: “Surely it was long ago, but He did suffer this!” She fixed her eyes; in other words, she looked with the eyes of faith, which enabled her to experience on the spot what the image represented.¹³⁸ Pictures, sculptures, mental images (metaphors), words, liturgical celebrations, bread and wine—all these could open the spectators’ eyes of faith and allow them to experience what they represented. This was true of Juliana when she received a vision, but it was in fact no different for ordinary faithful when they re-created Mary’s joys and sorrows. Seeing the *presentia realis* in the consecrated host and in the True Face were essentially the same phenomenon. The art historian Michael Camille maintains: “The notion of the ‘real presence’ in Eucharistic practice must have deeply influenced people’s perception of images, for here a visible thing was itself capable of becoming and not just signifying its prototype. For the new spiritual groups in the thirteenth century, especially women, this means of direct access to the godhead was a powerful

stimulus to new kinds of spirituality, far more image-based.”¹³⁹ Juliana, during her first visits to Eve, “saw” that there was no consecrated host present in St. Martin—a relatively new devotion in those days—and later, after Eve had evidently provided for this, she did see Christ’s presence. When shown the supposed scourge of Christ, Juliana also “saw” that it was not the authentic scourge. Similarly Mary of Oignies, while in a church, was overcome with a feeling that a great festival was approaching even though the priest knew nothing about it, and she began to ring the bell herself.¹⁴⁰ Anecdotes like these reveal the kind of spirituality in which the Feast of the Sacrament was anchored.

It was in the church building that the parishioners’ eyes of faith were opened. In this holy place they relived biblical events and saw salvation. Devout eyes looked through surface appearances to what lay hidden behind them. They saw the holy enacted before their eyes. They became eyewitnesses. Like Simeon they could say: “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (the words Jacques Pantaleon-Pope Urban IV wrote to Eve in 1264). In this respect there was little difference between their “seeing” of the Veronica, the veneration of the consecrated host in the church, and their presence at the celebration of the Eucharist. In the consecrated host they saw and encountered Christ himself. The host was actually the most concentrated form of “seeing salvation.” What did make a difference was whether the faithful took communion, for touching, feeling, and tasting added dimensions beyond the visual. Juliana, like Hadewych, experienced her most intense ecstasies during communion. For this reason Juliana wanted to make the shared holy banquet the central festival of the community, the feast of the Communion of the Body of the Lord.

In church the faithful relived the unfolding of salvation history. In the course of the liturgical year they re-created all the major events from the life of Christ and his Mother, two cycles of more or less equal rank.¹⁴¹ This was not a daily meditation on the Passion—that would come in the late Middle Ages—but a reenactment of the entire history of salvation as the liturgical year progressed. For Juliana the *annus affectionis*, the celebratory experience of the Church year through the “eyes of love,” began with the Annunciation, when she joined in the pious assent of Mary and accepted her role: “be it unto me according to thy word.”¹⁴² At Christmas she re-created the birth of Jesus, and in the Passion Week his suffering. With the Feast of the Ascension her “emotional” year came to an end. On that day she went outside and “saw” her Lord ascending toward heaven. When the

festival was over, “a great sadness washed over her, as if she had been left behind, alone and orphaned. But afterwards, at the sacrament of the altar, she again found great consolation,” because the Lord had left behind for his disciples, and for all the faithful after them, the comforting words: “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28: 20). The hagiographer quotes here the exact words that Juliana placed at the beginning of the Vespers of her Corpus Christi liturgy.¹⁴³ Here the emotional roots of the feast become visible. Just as solemn celebrations were held to mark the coming of Christ at the Annunciation (even though he was of course present always) and his ascent into heaven on Ascension Day, there was also a need for a solemn festival at which all believers could celebrate his permanent presence on earth.¹⁴⁴ Pentecost, as pointed out above, did not fulfill this function for them.

After these examples, the communal character of the religious culture hardly needs further elucidation. The shared celebration in church both demonstrated and constituted the faith as lived out in the corporeal community of the faithful; it created a group identity and guaranteed concord and harmony among the members. This was of vital importance in the new cities and commercial centers, where old familial ties had fallen away. In the early Middle Ages, when the extended family formed the basic unit of society, the sacrament of baptism occupied a central position. At baptism the infant was incorporated into the Christian *ecclesia*, but also into the clan that gathered around the baptismal font. Here the basic social unit was formed and confirmed. In the new cities another sacrament was needed, one capable of welding together the artificial aggregation of individuals and small families. As Bossy and Rubin have shown, the sacrament of the mass acquired this function and the Eucharist became the symbol, that is “the eucharistic eating whereby the Christian participates in communion, common union, the wholeness of Christ and his church, the token of his entry into transcendent life.”¹⁴⁵

Female Agency Again

It was in this religious culture that Juliana spent her formative years. As a child she was educated in it by Sapientia, who served as both her *nutrix* and her *magistra*. As an adult she remained rooted in it, more so than the theologians who had pursued academic studies and often began to suffer from a certain occupational disability. Considering—as we have seen in

the previous chapter—that religious culture in the lay world was predominantly a matter of women, it is not surprising that they assumed the role of spokesperson, that they interpreted the ideas and feelings of the lay community for the clergy. Juliana and her companion Eve took it upon themselves to play this role.

As an adolescent Juliana enjoyed the basic education of both a *litteratus* and a theologian. She read the Bible in the vernacular and in Latin, the Church Fathers, and especially Bernard of Clairvaux (whose name may conceal several authors). In this way she developed into a common theologian and a learned interpreter of the religious feelings of the community.¹⁴⁶ She was able to express the most important desiderata of the religious culture in theological jargon and to concretize them in proposals for liturgical renewal. She could enter into discussion with the theologians of her time and negotiate with prelates in the institutional Church.

The scholastic theologians of her day were open to her ideas. Because she made use of prophetic discourse, the magisters could recognize her as a prophetess according to the new definition of Hugh of St. Cher and Thomas. She was accepted as an adviser in matters of Church reform. I will elaborate on this in the next chapter.

In keeping with the social customs of her day, Juliana went public only after reaching the age of forty. In the same years, however, she became entangled in problems relating to the leprosarium. She was attacked for the rigid regime she imposed on the young girls, accused of theft (of her own donation documents), and even physically threatened. This meant that the life she led was not beyond reproach, and conservative clerics could dare to accuse her of being a fantast and a dreamer. Even after enclosure in her anchorhold in Fosses she lacked the holiness to exploit her position as a recluse.

In her better years, however, she had already achieved a great deal. After 1215, when Pope Innocent III managed to force through a number of important reforms at the Lateran Council (the duty of parish priests to preach and therefore to be properly educated, their duty to hear confession, and the duty of laypersons to attend communion at least once a year), worried townsfolk gained the ear of reformers among the clergy by way of their common theologians. Certain shared interests now became visible. The prelates saw in Juliana's proposal a good "point for action" in their own struggle to reform the clergy. It was a helpful tool for breaking open old structures. This helps explain why men like James of Vitry, Hugh of St. Cher, Jacques Pantaleon, and Guiard of Laon, all high-ranking

prelates, came out in support of her initiative and wielded their influence within the cumbersome power structure of the Church to make the festival a reality. They did this out of consideration of Church politics, to be sure, but also, it seems, because the prayers and hymns of Juliana touched them personally. Besides being great prelates they were also great believers, and as such they felt enriched in their own spirituality—it was no coincidence that Jacques Pantaleon took Juliana’s prayers with him on his journey through life.

Yet her office was not adopted. Hugh of St. Cher, then papal legate, had already distanced himself slightly from Juliana’s theology in his bull of 1252, in which he prescribed the festival for the areas under his authority.¹⁴⁷ Guiard of Laon also continued to attach greater importance to the *ex opere operato* character of the Eucharist and thus to the “fruits of the communion” than to the personal spiritual experience of the lay believer, who in Juliana’s view should engage in prayer and fasting to prepare for an effective participation in communion. These men were in the first place prelates, and they remained so. In 1264, while Thomas Aquinas was at the court of Urban IV, he—the exponent of sacerdotal theology—saw to it that Juliana’s bolder ideas were toned down. The safeguarding of the *sacerdotium* won out in Church politics over personal spirituality. With the new office of Thomas the feast moved in a new direction, with the unintended result that the faithful began to look outside the Church for ways to celebrate their common ideals. The Procession of the Sacrament through the city and the Feast of Corpus Christi in the street came to replace the communal celebration in the church.¹⁴⁸

And Thomas? Did he feel any personal appeal or could he dissociate himself completely from Juliana’s affective spirituality? I was struck by the observation of scholars like Torrell, Mazza, Gy, and others that Thomas’s theology must have undergone a drastic change in the course of his scholastic career.¹⁴⁹ What he had asserted as a young man in his commentary on the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard (in the 1250s) was much more rigid and more strictly logical in a philosophical sense than what he later posited in *Summa IIIa* (1270s). In his hymn *Adoro te devote* Thomas even struck an affective note, which prompted Gy to claim that this hymn must have been written by someone else.¹⁵⁰ In his *Summa* Thomas felt compelled to abandon his rigid position of “reason alone,” which limited any assertions about what God is to statements about what God is not—not localized in the Sacrament, for example. He retracted this and now recognized the presence of Christ in the bread and wine. By way of explanation

he appealed to the miracle of God, an argument of the “eye of love,” in my view. Thomas now quoted Alger of Liège, just as Juliana had done.¹⁵¹

Most telling, to my mind, is that according to the scholars mentioned above, this change must have taken place during his work on the Corpus Christi office—in other words, while he was thinking about the texts and prayers of Juliana and about the theology that spoke from them. Can we conclude that Juliana’s view did influence him after all, that he could no longer turn a deaf ear to the prophetic voice? Did he come to recognize that women with prophetic vision could sometimes see more than the learned do with the eye of reason? This certainly appears to be the case. My initial question—was there a certain amount of discussion conducted on an equal footing between practitioners of common theology and learned theologians?—can therefore be answered affirmatively. Even for Thomas Aquinas.

Eve of St. Martin, the Faithful of Liège, and the Church

WHEN EVE AS A YOUNG GIRL once went to visit her spiritual mother, Juliana of Cornillon, she was given an apple to eat on her way back. Still ruminating on the sweet words she had exchanged with Juliana and filled with her initiation into heavenly bliss, the apple seemed to her the sweetest thing she had ever tasted. Her friends, to whom she offered a bite, agreed that they had never eaten such a wonderfully sweet apple. Eve was then convinced that the sweetness had not grown naturally in the apple but had been added by the merits of Juliana. Later she would use this memory to illustrate the sanctity of the woman she so admired. She very likely also chose this anecdote because she saw in it an allusion to Juliana's sacramental theology.¹

In recent literature Eve is mainly depicted as the quiet pillar of strength behind Juliana, the protégée who persevered even after her mistress had given up. There is no denying that Eve did play this role, but did she perhaps do more as well? This skilled use of a memory leads me to believe that she was more than merely the woman in the background—a conjecture supported by additional observations. St. Martin evidently became the mother church of the Feast of Corpus Christi and not Cornillon. How can this be explained? Eve's grave became the central monument, while Juliana disappeared into oblivion. Why? What part did Eve play in instituting the Feast of the Sacrament, and what was her view of the sacramental devotion on the rise in her time? Why was it Eve who received an official papal brief, a solemn bull informing her of the institution of the feast? This was an exceptional honor, for it is one of the few papal bulls, if not the only one, sent to an individual woman in the Middle Ages. Why did medieval chroniclers speak only of her? What does this say about Eve? And, given the central aim of this book—to investigate the

social and religious significance of recluses—what does this say about the fact that she was a recluse? Why did she opt for the anchoritic existence, while her teacher Juliana did not do so? Does she explain this herself? And what did that anchoritic life look like around the middle of the thirteenth century, when, according to my hypothesis, it was in full flourish? Finally, what did she manage to accomplish in her capacity as a recluse, and what was she not able to do?

The Sources

A PAPAL BULL

As mentioned above, we have in Eve's case an unusual source available, an official but at the same time highly personal papal bull.² In 1264, after Urban IV had decided to universally institute the Feast of the Sacrament, he wrote a warmly worded letter to the old recluse in Liège, who, he knew, had desired the institution of this festival with all her heart: "We know, o daughter, with what intense longing your soul has desired the institution of this solemn festival of the most holy Body of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Church. . . . Know, then, that we have established it as a universal feast and that we have celebrated it with all the prelates here in Orvieto. . . . 'Let your soul magnify the Lord and let your spirit leap up to greet your God, for your eyes have seen the salvation which we have prepared before the face of all people.'"

The quotation here is from the song of Mary and the song of Simeon (Luke 1: 46–47, 2: 29–32), but it is also reminiscent of the song of Zechariah used in the enclosure rite for recluses and as such, no doubt, especially dear to Eve. Attached to the bull was the new office—the office of Thomas Aquinas, that is, not of Juliana—and the pope charged Eve, *per apostolica scripta tibi mandamus*, "that you respectfully receive this quire and that you freely and liberally provide a copy to all persons who request it." If nothing else about the Liège recluse has drawn our attention, this bull alone is enough to alert us to her exceptional position. Eve must have made a tremendous impression on her contemporaries, including the higher clergy, to be shown such an honor. She must also have been a woman of considerable influence for the pope to have assigned her this task. But it is a letter with more than one level and as such requires further exegesis.

EVE'S BOOKLET

Because a separate life story of Eve does not exist, we have to rely on the *Vita* of Juliana. Eve not only plays a prominent part in that narrative but also serves as the hagiographer's most important source of information. He regularly mentions her as an informant and in addition names her, albeit indirectly, as the author of his main written source: "thanks to the care of a very religious person various parts [of a history of Juliana and the institution of the Feast of the Sacrament?] were, so to speak, already written down in the French language so that they would not be lost."³ Although there is no conclusive evidence that this religious person was Eve, all scholars since Demarteau have accepted that this passage refers to her and that she either committed her memories to writing herself (Demarteau, Lambot) or dictated them to someone else (Balau).⁴ Since recent research has shown that medieval women were not necessarily illiterate creatures, the last reason for doubt—was a woman capable of such a thing?—has been eliminated.

After Juliana's death but before the pope decided to institute the festival, Eve had apparently produced these *Fragmenta*, a book of notes or a more coherent collection of short exempla that included a *brevis commendatio*, a short eulogy on Juliana's holy way of life.⁵ Although it was certainly laudable in the eyes of John of Lausanne, to whom she had submitted it, it failed to do justice, in his opinion, to Juliana's "sanctity, purity, charity, and zeal for justice." In other words, John concluded that Juliana needed a full-fledged saint's Life, and a hagiographer was commissioned for this task. This author translated into Latin what was written in French, *adorsus sum quod Gallice factum fuerat vertere in latinum*, and reworked the material into a genuine saint's Life. In the process, as pointed out in the last chapter, he modeled Juliana into a pious virgin martyr and turned her struggle into a kind of general Church issue.⁶ In his treatment of the festival he kept Juliana—and, as we shall see, Eve as well—out of the limelight as much as possible. Unfortunately, no comparison of the two texts is possible because Eve's writings have not survived, but there is enough information available to continue our investigation.

Her book was most likely not disposed of immediately but preserved together with the papal bull and other venerable documents, for as late as the seventeenth century Barthélemy Fisen reports in his *Origo prima Festi*

Corporis Christi that “the House Cornillon [still] possesses in an extremely old manuscript the life story written in French,” *hanc vitam*—he calls it a *vita*!—*Gallice scriptam in libello M.S. pervetusto*, “which our anonymous author translated on the request of John of Lausanne; or rather which he completed by adding a great deal of supplementary material. He wrote it more in a devotional than in a Latin style, paying little attention to the chronological order of events. And he rounded it off with the death of the holy virgin.” There can be little doubt that this was Eve’s text, still extant in the seventeenth century. At some later point it must have been lost, as was the papal bull.⁷

What insights and ideas did Eve give to the hagiographer? Can we form any notion at all about them while having no recourse to her text? To a certain extent it is possible. In a sequence of chapters dealing with Juliana’s mystical experiences and examples of her prophetic gifts, the hagiographer cites Eve as his informant.⁸ And any information about Juliana’s inner life is also credited to her; only occasionally does he refer to someone else, Imena for example, abbess of Salzinnes, who guided Juliana through the last ten years of her life.⁹ From her early youth, Eve had been Juliana’s confidante in Liège; to her Juliana could freely communicate her innermost thoughts and feelings. Eve apparently made a selection from these, which she recorded in her *Fragmenta* or reported in conversations with the hagiographer.¹⁰ He, in turn, selected from this what he considered relevant for the saint’s Life, remodeled the chosen passages into an ornate Latin, and flavored them with a “hagiographic” interpretation. In the passages based on Eve we encounter relatively many stylistic devices considered typical of a feminine narrative.¹¹ It is very tempting here to view the French text of Eve’s exempla as a kind of palimpsest underneath the Latin exposé, although some devices can be found elsewhere in the *Vita* as well.

This is our first line of information about Eve’s own insights; the relevant passages will be examined in detail later in this chapter. It should be noted here that for the period in Salzinnes and Fosses (after 1248) Imena had hoped to gain a similar position of confidante, but all the evidence indicates that Juliana did not like her and that she was not inclined to take any of the other nuns into her confidence either. The hagiographer complains bitterly that even on her deathbed she did not wish to reveal any of her secrets.¹² This makes the information supplied by Eve all the more significant for us.

THE LATIN *VITA*

A question more difficult to answer is whether we can also, as a second line, retrieve information about Eve's ideas from the core sections of the *Vita*, where the author presents a more general history of the Feast of Corpus Christi. Although Eve is here depicted as an agent herself—and this will form my third line of information—she is at no point indicated as an informant, either explicitly or implicitly.¹³ Yet she must have supplied the hagiographer with material he needed. Fortunately, there are historiographical sources that shed some light here. Various chroniclers from later times also described the history of the Corpus Christi feast, notably the anonymous author of a Liège manuscript from the fifteenth century, as well as Blaer of Diest in 1496, Chapeville in 1613, and Fisen in 1628.¹⁴ While they all base their work primarily on the *Vita*, they at times include information they could not have derived from this source. Often these are matters that involve Eve and St. Martin. Where did they get this information? And what does it tell us about our hagiographer and his relation to Eve?

To answer these questions it is helpful to place their histories beside the capita II, 6–20 of the *Vita*, chapters that the hagiographer introduces with the heading “How the solemn Feast of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord was first revealed to Juliana,” *Quomodo iuliane revelata est primitus sollempnitas sacramenti corporis et sanguinis domini*, and that describe the evolution of the feast from the first vision (ca. 1210) to its institution by the papal legate Hugh of St. Cher (1252). These are the sections plundered by later historians. If we eliminate the hagiographic coloring of the text (the insistence, for example, that Juliana was not disobedient but simply humble, as befits a saint, when she said nothing about her visions for twenty years), and if we also ignore both the moralistic digressions (such as: take note, girls, how Juliana never did anything on her own but always submitted everything to the *magni clerici*) and the documents inserted by the hagiographer—if we in this way distill the factual motifs and events from his account, the *Vita* then exhibits the same narrative pattern as that found in Blaer of Diest, for example. Blaer even cites entire passages verbatim, although considerably abridged. Of the *multi libri* he consulted in St. Martin, the *Vita* was apparently his prime source. But he includes additional information as well. He describes, for example, how after the death of Bishop Robert of Thourotte in 1246 only St. Martin began celebrating the feast. The canons did so because “living

in the church of St. Martin at that time was a religious woman, named Eve, who led the life of angels,” and she was held in such high esteem by the canons that on her urging they began to celebrate the festival.¹⁵

We can assume that Blaer took this information from Eve’s own booklet. Since he shows himself to be a conscientious and critical historian who quotes accurately and does not hesitate to denounce inferior spinners of tales, we should take his extra information extremely seriously. But if he did derive additional facts from Eve, or from some other source that had processed her *Fragmenta*, and if he saw no further reason to correct the text of the *Vita*, this also means that he found that for the rest the two texts, *Vita* and *Fragmenta*, were in agreement. He does, after all, follow the structure of the *Vita*. We can assume, then, that the hagiographer, besides expanding the text into a saint’s Life, more or less faithfully incorporated Eve’s notes—as he said himself: “I have undertaken to translate into Latin what was written in French.” And just as Juliana had told Eve *per ordinem* the entire history of the Feast of the Sacrament, which the latter noted down in her *Fragmenta*, he dutifully adopted Eve as his guide for the *Vita*.¹⁶ He added only hagiographic elements and (pious) Latin stylistic devices.¹⁷

It is extremely disappointing for us that Fisen, who includes such incisive remarks on these dull stylistic devices, docilely follows the lead of the hagiographer in his own text. But he does specify that his remarks about the hagiographer’s lack of ordering apply mainly to the heaping up of miracles at the end of Book I of the *Vita*.¹⁸ This confirms my assumption that Eve did not pay a great deal of attention to Juliana’s saintly qualities, and that the hagiographer had to come up with supplementary material himself, which took the form of a character sketch and a set of miracle stories in the first book of the *Vita*. Eve must have focused mainly on a well-ordered history of the feast and its underlying sacramental theology.

My overall conclusion is, first of all, that Eve’s text must have consisted of more than some jotted-down memories. Beginning with a short characterization of Juliana’s exemplary piety as a way to lend authority to her as an author of visions and an office,¹⁹ it must have proceeded to describe the whole history of the feast from the first vision to the introduction of the festival in Liège and concluded with Juliana’s prediction that the festival would be universally celebrated.²⁰ There must also have been a final paragraph indicating that the torch had been passed on to Eve.²¹ As the last chapter of the *Vita* testifies, Eve herself also received visions, which allowed her to consider herself an “authorized” prophetess.

In the years following Juliana's departure she was therefore able to convince the canons of St. Martin to celebrate the feast annually, persuade the papal legate Hugh of St. Cher to celebrate the Corpus Christi mass in her church and institute the feast in the territories under his jurisdiction, and subsequently urge the pope, her former intimate from Liège, to introduce the feast universally. I shall return to some of these points below.

In the second place, this means that any additional information found in Liège historians who had access to the sources in St. Martin should be taken seriously, and that each case should be judged on its own merits. Especially Jean d'Outremeuse in the fourteenth century, Blaer of Diest in the fifteenth, and the historians of the early modern era include extra material of this kind.²² Third, our hagiographer seems to have been a conscientious author; for tactical reasons he may have left out certain events or heaped others together, but he did not falsify information. What he tells about the history of the Feast of the Sacrament does not contradict the material Eve must have given him. It is even possible that his basic story coincides with Eve's *Fragmenta*. But he probably stripped down Eve's text, eliminating specific ideas and, possibly, information about the role played by women, material that would be of special interest to us now but would have damaged his picture of the passive virgin martyr. Elsewhere in the *Vita* he does allude to such things. He then embellished the flat text of her story with Latin stylistic devices and incorporated it into—or better, perhaps, submerged it in—his general account of the Feast of Corpus Christi. He also, as mentioned earlier, kept Eve as far from the limelight as he did Juliana.

My investigations have therefore confirmed the existence of a second woman author besides Juliana and have revealed the contours of her book. But we can still do no more than speculate about the exact wording of her work. For a glimpse into her ideas we have to rely on the first line of information, Eve as informant, and on the third line, Eve as agent. More is not available.

Biography

Like Juliana, Eve must have been from an upper-class family. If, as modern bone research has shown, she was fifty-five to sixty years old at her death, some time after 1264, she must have been born around 1210.²³ That would make her some twenty years younger than Juliana, an age difference

that corresponds to the picture of their relationship drawn in the *Vita*. She was reasonably well-to-do. When angry citizens destroyed Juliana's cell and the bishop ordered it to be rebuilt, Eve together with John of Lausanne and a few others provided the funding—evidence, we might add, that she had not given up her property on her enclosure.²⁴ She must have had an outstanding education. Not only was she capable of putting her thoughts on paper, but she knew Latin as well. The pope, we know, sent her a Latin office and asked her to distribute it among interested parties—two facts that point to a level of intellectual development far beyond average. If we take the papal charge literally, she must also have been a trained copyist. As a young girl Eve came into contact with Juliana, who became her spiritual mother. Blaer of Diest writes: "By means of the gospel Juliana had given birth to her for the Lord, and for this reason she often came to visit and spoke with her about her heavenly secrets."²⁵ Our hagiographer is somewhat less explicit but also praises the "indissoluble bond of love" between them.²⁶ There is no evidence that Eve was a young cousin or niece of Juliana's, although this is certainly feasible in view of family traditions of the time. Eve could then also have had some connection with the counts of Loon.

When Eve developed the desire to become an anchoress, it was quite natural for her to discuss this with Juliana. Together they spoke about the great demands that life in a *recluserium* made on the human constitution and about the "loftiness" of this way of life.²⁷ As mentioned before, recluses led the "life of angels," and the great esteem they enjoyed could well have been daunting for Eve. But Juliana helped her overcome her fears. We can surmise that Juliana herself cherished a longing for enclosure to which she would yield in the last years of her life. She, however, lacked the perseverance and balanced spirit necessary for this arduous existence. She liked to withdraw for study and meditation but was also easily ruffled. She needed confidantes around her, like Eve and later Isabelle of Huy, who in difficult times could take over her responsibilities; she leaned heavily on them.²⁸ With foresight she realized that Eve did have the kind of strong personality that could make a success of the reclusive life. Moreover, Eve was the type of complaisant, outgoing person who could exploit the specific possibilities of such an existence. On this point, too, Juliana fell short. Like a good "mother," however, she stimulated her "daughter" to strive for goals she could not achieve herself. And they agreed that Juliana would regularly come to visit. On those occasions she ate and slept in the anchorhold and prayed the hours with Eve.

Eve was in the bloom of youth, *in etate floride iuventutis*, when she ventured the step. My estimate is that she was about twenty years old.²⁹ This means that she must have been enclosed sometime between 1230 and 1235, just at the time when Juliana was publicizing her ideas. It was very likely an official event marked by the solemn rite of enclosure, for the hagiographer can name the year and the day—the same day on which the recluse in Fosses entered her cell, the one that Juliana would occupy later.³⁰ Was this perhaps a fixed “enclosure day,” and if so, which day was it? And who conducted the ceremony? Could it have been the bishop himself or the vicar general of the bishopric perhaps; or prelates of the stature of James of Vitry, the suffragan, or in later years Jacques Pantaléon and Renier of Tongeren, who were charged with the supervision of independent religious women?

We can only guess at Eve’s reasons for choosing a *recluserium* rather than a convent. Perhaps she found the convents of her day—like Cornillon, with its lax way of life—not lofty enough; her ambition reached higher. It is not hard to understand why she opted against an independent religious life “in the world.” Accounts of her older contemporary Odilia of Liège (d. 1220), who after a turbulent life finally found peace as a recluse, illustrate the perils facing a devout woman in Liège. Odilia, who thanks to her son John, priest of St. Lambert, was given a saint’s Life and even found her way into the chronicle of Aegidius of Orval, must have been born around 1165. Married at the age of eighteen, even though she would have preferred to remain a virgin for Christ, and the mother of a son, she devoted the rest of her life to God as soon as she became a widow. Like so many others of her day she became a vowess. She began with seven years of extreme asceticism: fasting, watching through the night, putting herself in chains in order to retrieve her virginal, asexual state—an intriguing fact in itself, this belief that seven years of asceticism would restore a woman to that untouched state.³¹ At night, when Odilia went with her young son to the parish church to pray, she experienced the same fears as other pious women. She also fell prey to the same temptations. If it was not a suspicious recluse who accused her of unorthodox practices (not altogether unjustly, perhaps?), it was a sympathetic friend who seduced her with showers of alms or a priest for whom she worked as a “housekeeper.” For years she was held back from the life she had chosen for herself, and only in the anchorhold of St. Severin (ca. 1210–20) did she find rest.³² Her life was far from exceptional, although it is one of the few described in writing. James of Vitry also saw the danger of devout women

going about on their own and urged them to live in convents—from his standpoint as a responsible prelate an understandable option, but strong women often preferred a different solution. Unwilling to renounce all personal initiative and responsibility, they persistently—despite countless obstacles and false starts—sought to shape their own lives. They wanted to develop an individual identity and in addition to play an active role in society. Often they ended up in an anchorhold.

Eve's choice for a cell at St. Martin was a logical one. Later, in the years between 1240 and 1250, this would prove an important center for those committed to reform. The chapter may in fact have had a long history of reformist activity. Founded as a cathedral church in the tenth century, it soon lost that privileged position to St. Lambert, but with its location just outside the old city wall it continued to offer the possibilities of an alternative center. In other towns, too, devout women would often settle near a church or chapel just outside the city center.³³ At St. Martin Eve found a group of canons whom she could mobilize for the Feast of Corpus Christi. John of Lausanne was the first, followed by Steven of Châlons and his sister Mary, as well as a certain John. Eve also had contact with the parishioners, as some of the miracles in the *Vita* testify.

Eve must have spent some forty years enclosed at St. Martin. From the information we have available, this period seems to have been dominated by two concerns: her fervent commitment to realizing the Corpus Christi feast as well as the recognition of prophetic authority in women. Initially Eve and Juliana worked closely together. Juliana developed the theology for the Feast of the Sacrament and wrote the office. She undertook a promotional tour, where she spoke with saints but probably with influential prelates as well. Eve worked on the church prelates with whom she came into contact at St. Martin, such as the sympathetic bishop Guiard of Laon and the then-cardinal Hugh of St. Cher. She also addressed Jacques Pantaleon, about whom more will be said below. The bishop announced the festival in 1246, but when he died before its actual introduction, it was thanks to Eve's efforts that the canons of St. Martin initiated the annual celebration. She persuaded individual canons to make funds available for a ceremony of great splendor. In 1251 she was witness to the activities of Hugh, by then papal legate. In full cardinal's vestments he celebrated the mass in her church and introduced the feast into the areas under his jurisdiction. She then devoted all her energy to having an annual Feast of the Sacrament introduced in the universal Church. And, perhaps inspired by Juliana, she formulated a common theology that

served as a foundation for the devotion of the Eucharist and the religious leadership of prophetic women. In 1264 she saw herself recognized as a prophetess by the pope, who entrusted her with the “priestly” task of disseminating the festival and the liturgy.

Between Church and World

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE PRINCE-BISHOPRIC

Both the city and the bishopric of Liège were undergoing a turbulent development in Eve’s time.³⁴ In the city even more than in the prince-bishopric the bishop played a double role as spiritual leader and secular ruler, and the same was true of the canons of St. Lambert. Family background and close ties with the nobility led these clerics to give priority to their administrative tasks. Their pastoral duties consequently fell by the board, as their main concern was to consolidate and expand their power—a trend gaining momentum at this time, as the chapter gave up (the fiction of) communal life, allowing every canon to fend for himself. This evoked a great deal of criticism from reform-minded clerics.³⁵

The common faithful in the city were also very critical. This had come to expression in their enthusiastic following of the critical priest Lambert li Bèges in the twelfth century and in the great popularity of his St. Christophe Parish in the thirteenth; in their faulting of the clergy for their worldly way of life and for the fact that many of them were “married”;³⁶ and in the development of their own independent religious culture. The contours of this phenomenon were sketched in the last chapter. The townspeople also clashed with the Church over political and economic issues. The rapid growth of Liège into a large city, with its population doubling from 10,000 to 20,000 or perhaps even 25,000, and the accompanying increase in economic and political potential, led to conflicts with the conservative clergy with their still strongly feudal mentality. This resulted in 1210 and again from 1253 to 1256 in uprisings and civil war. We might expect that the rebellious citizenry coupled political and economic claims with their religious demands; in other words, that they linked their struggle to gain a more active role for the *humiles* in the Church to a demand that the *humiles* be given a greater say in the town. Despite a diligent search in the sources, I have so far uncovered no connection of this sort. The only hint is the link made by our hagiographer

between the rejection of Juliana's festival by Henry of Guelders and the disasters that befell Liège in 1253.³⁷

Not all canons and not the entire clergy were guilty of misconduct. There were also reform-minded clerics who in the spirit of the Lateran Council (1215) took their pastoral tasks seriously. They offered spiritual guidance, instructed believers who were eager to learn, and even began their new task of regular preaching. This reformist fervor was given a tremendous boost when Robert of Thourotte became bishop in 1240. A schism following the death of John of Eppes in 1238 and the subsequent death (by poisoning?) of his successor in 1239 prompted Rome to intervene and urge the appointment of Robert of Thourotte, a papal diplomat and shrewd arbitrator.³⁸ Robert brought his clique of French intellectuals with him to Liège. As canon of Laon he had come to appreciate Guiard of Laon and Jacques Pantaleon, both trained at the University of Paris. They were now employed in a variety of tasks. As papal arbitrator he had formed a friendship with Bishop Boniface of Lausanne, who now regularly served as vicar or mediator. The canon of St. Martin whom we now know as John of Lausanne, the loyal ally of Eve and Juliana, may have come with him as well. Under Robert, the Dominicans, present in Liège since 1229/1231, were also given every chance to develop their reformist activities. The same was true of other regulars active in and around Liège. Almost all of these men eventually paid their respects at Eve's anchorhold and supported Eve's and Juliana's ideas for a new feast.

With these men theologians from the learned avant-garde in Paris came to Liège, and good relations were established with circles around the pope. While the last chapter highlighted the thought of the Paris master and theologian Hugh of St. Cher and the intellectual support of Guiard of Laon and Philip the Chancellor, with Jacques Pantaleon still barely visible in the background, the focus here is on these prelates' zeal for Church reform, and Pantaleon steps out of the shadows. The point of reference shifts gradually from Paris to Rome and the papal court. A striking example is that the Italian Theobald Visconti, the later Pope Gregory X, was for many years archdeacon in Liège.³⁹

THE GREAT STIMULATOR, JACQUES PANTALEON OF TROYES

Jacques Pantaleon (ca. 1185–1264), about whom no thorough modern study has yet been written, already stood out in his early years in Troyes,

owing to his splendid singing voice and his love of liturgy and preaching.⁴⁰ Sent to Paris, he developed into a skilled theologian and lawyer; there he also had the chance to cultivate his rhetorical talents and his “Burgundian” gift for writing. Of decisive importance for the history of the Church and religious women was the close friendship he formed with Hugh of St. Cher. In 1215 he was called to Laon, where he organized the episcopal administration—the comprehensive cartulary of the bishopric that he set up still contains notes in his hand—but also served as a parish priest in the city. Born pastor and preacher that he was, he could now exploit his exceptional talents. He proved an ardent advocate of affective spirituality and a critic of the power-hungry and money-minded clergy, as a few sermons by his hand and a humorous diatribe on the canons of Liège testify.⁴¹ Drawn into the church affairs of Liège by Bishop John of Eppes and Robert of Thourotte, both from Laon, his main field of action shifted to Liège after 1240. Canon of St. Lambert from 1232, he was involved by John of Eppes in the problems in Juliana’s leprosarium.⁴² In 1245 at the Council of Lyon he—together with his friend, the brand new cardinal Hugh of St. Cher—stood out for his commitment to action and was appointed court chaplain by Innocent IV. From that moment on we see him taking an increasingly active role in the universal Church, especially after the death of Robert of Thourotte in 1246, when the conservative rule of Henry of Guelders made it impossible for him to work in Liège. He traveled to Poland, became bishop of Verdun (1253), patriarch of Jerusalem (1255), and from 1261 to 1264 pope. But he did not forget his spiritual friends in Laon and Liège, the beguines and the recluses. Immediately in the first year of his pontificate he sent them encouragement in papal briefs: the *sedes apostolica* would watch over them like a mother.⁴³

Clearly, Hugh of St. Cher and Jacques Pantaléon, two of the greatest personalities in the Church, men with vision and daring, were active in Liège precisely in the years when Juliana and Eve were propagating their ideas. The two women thus had fortune on their side.⁴⁴

RECLUSIVE LIFE IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

By Eve’s time, the reclusive life in the southern Low Countries was in full flourish. I am aware of nineteen anchorholds in the city of Liège alone in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and many more outside the town. Twenty-three of the Liège city recluses can even be identified by name.

Eve either knew or could have known perhaps nine of these, and two of them figure in the *Vita*.⁴⁵ The traditional clergy, however, was not enthusiastic about recluses. As stated in Chapter 1, the apostolic legate Guido of Preneste, sent by Pope Innocent III to the bishopric in 1201–2 to promote ecclesiastical reform, had recognized the reclusive way of life and brought it under the diocesan regime. “No male or female recluse may be enclosed without permission of the bishop.”⁴⁶ From that moment on, the bishop and his clergy could no longer pursue a hands-off policy. As the free reclusive life kept broadening its scope and, more generally, the free religious life of housewives, virgins, and beguines assumed unprecedented proportions, the clergy found itself under increasing pressure to impose rules and order. In 1242, under the reform-minded regime of Robert of Thourotte, Jacques Pantaleon introduced the Rule of Augustine in the disorderly lepers’ convent of Cornillon. Both healthy and sick members of the convent were required to give up their possessions, take a vow, and obey the (moderate) rule.⁴⁷ It is the same rule that Yvette had adopted with her community. After the inspiring Council of Lyon in 1245, Jacques Pantaleon wrote a *Libellus de Regula et Vita Beginarum* for use in the bishopric of Liège, a work that unfortunately has been lost but that can largely be reconstructed from a later reference in a charter by Henry of Guelders (1266) and a Middle Dutch version.⁴⁸

In 1266 Renier, head of the chapter school in Tongeren and for many years vicar general of the bishopric of Liège, was charged with the supervision of “all beguines and beghards, as well as other religious women, ailing and well, *living in reclusoria*, hospitals, or leprosaria, founded in the city or bishopric of Liège.” In 1246 Jacques Pantaleon, Renier’s immediate predecessor, must have assumed this task, for the document goes on to state that the episcopal supervisor is required to visit, correct, and reform the free religious women and arrange their way of life in keeping with the rules he deems suitable.⁴⁹ In addition it was his task to make sure that the women held monthly gatherings known as chapters—in other words, that they adhered to a form of communal life—and that on these occasions they read aloud the *Libellus* of Jacques Pantaleon to impress his rules upon them. Evidently Pantaleon wanted to regulate the life of unaffiliated religious women and laid down certain basic principles in the *Libellus*. These guidelines must have been quite similar to those in the Rule of Augustine, for there, too, chapter gatherings formed an essential feature. Finally, the supervisor was no longer to tolerate beguines going about on their own in beguine dress. All of them had to live together in a beguinage and if

necessary would be forced to do so with the help of secular authorities; otherwise they should simply be denied the label of persons leading a religious life.

This allows us to draw several important conclusions for our investigation into the free reclusive life. First, a wide spectrum of religious—beguines and beguards, recluses, hospital sisters, unaffiliated virgins and widows—were all lumped together and placed under the same type of rule in 1246. All unbound women in the canonical sense of the word, in other words women who had taken no vows, who were not members of an order or institution of the Church, and who had expressed no wish to live under a monastic rule but who did practice a strict religious life, were now thrown together in a kind of ecclesiastical framework and entrusted to the care of a guardian. This prelate was supposed to gradually ease them into an institutionalized form of communal life. Considerable pressure was applied in the direction of a beguinage or convent, or if need be a recluse's cell, and toward the straitjacket of a rule for all autonomous women. Anchoresses were not excluded. They, too, now had to be bound to vows and a rule. There apparently had to be an end to the *Deo sacratae* familiar to us from an earlier time. The free reclusive life as lived by Mary of Oignies, Christina the Astonishing, or Juliana of Cornillon—a few years in the anchorhold and then a few outside, without vows and without a rule—may have been admirable and, in the case of serious practitioners, praiseworthy as well, but it had to give way nevertheless to an institutionalized enclosure and some form of organizational context. As pope, Pantaleon would accordingly address the *collegia* of beguines and anchoresses in 1262.⁵⁰ The time of free experimentation was past: the experiments of Guibert's mother and Yvette (and the many others whose names are unknown) had in the meantime yielded a usable institution, which now apparently had to be generally instituted. *Reclusio*, the free form of enclosure, moved in the direction of *clausura*, the required seclusion. Wherever possible a life of free consecration to God was bound to a rule, a *forma vitae*, and an organization. That such a transformation was not easily implemented in practice is another question.

Second, Jacques Pantaleon phrased here for Liège some of the ideals that had been propagated more and more vigorously in the universal Church ever since Gregory IX.⁵¹ In his bull *Gloriam virginalem* (1233) Gregory had introduced *clausura* as an ideal for all women. It is no coincidence, I believe, that we know of this bull only thanks to copies from the area of my research.⁵² Subsequently Innocent IV, together with Hugh of

St. Cher, would impress upon the Church hierarchy the need to finally provide for devout women. At the end of the century Boniface VIII in his bull *Periculoso ac detestabili quorundam monialium* would impose an actual *clausura* on all contemplative nuns in the universal Church.⁵³ This is not to say that he was immediately successful: “jusqu’au xive elles ne furent ni universelles, ni strictes, ni largement observées,” Jean Leclercq noted. As Katherine Gill has shown for Italy and Mary Laven has vividly demonstrated for Venice, *clausura*, complete with barred windows and the resulting escape attempts, was forced upon aristocratic young women only after Trent (1563). But the idea had already taken root with Gregory IX and steered the actions of Church reformers. Jacques Pantaleon was one of the first to point unaffiliated women in the direction of a closed convent or lifelong enclosure in an anchorhold. As pope he would be responsible for the new rule for Poor Clares, which for the first time imposed a strict *clausura* on a women’s order.⁵⁴ The two forms of enclosure, *reclusio* and *clausura*, were beginning to converge.

The document from 1266 tells us more as well. The men of the Church reform, Jacques Pantaleon (1241–48), Boniface of Lausanne (1242–?), and Renier of Tongeren (1246–67), must have taken an active interest in recluses. They were even able to subject them to extensive means of control and coercion. Jean d’Outremeuse therefore rightly noted: “et conisoit li pape [Urban IV] bien Eve, car ihl avoit maintes fois esteit en sa chambret, quant ihl demoroit à Liege, à Saint-Lambert, là ihl estoit canoyne devant.”⁵⁵ As archdeacon and vicar of the bishopric and as author of the *Libellus*, Pantaleon would have been responsible for the recluse of St. Martin.

Finally, it is becoming increasingly clear that Jacques Pantaleon must have been personally gripped by the deep—and what we tend to view as feminine—spirituality of Juliana and Eve. In all his functions he stimulated the forms in which it came to expression. His sermons delivered at his sister’s Cistercian convent already testify to this.⁵⁶ After returning to Laon (1248), he introduced the Feast of the Sacrament there, just as Guiard would do in Cambrai; later he did the same in Verdun.⁵⁷ In Poland he would introduce the veneration of the host that was carried in procession to the dying.⁵⁸ He took Juliana’s prayer book with him on his journey to Rome. From his own writings we know that he possessed the gift of tears. While traveling in southern Italy he even bought an icon of the True Face of Christ (the oldest one preserved in western Europe), which he gave to his sister in Laon, undoubtedly the same sort of icon

that Eve kept in her anchorhold. It indicates a faith focused on the incarnate Christ, an emotional religiosity that he shared with the women. The accompanying letter testifies to his warm, empathetic character: do not let yourself be misled, dear sister, by the dark, tanned features of Christ. Our Lord did not live in a protected environment and a moderate climate like the young noblemen here, but suffered for us in the merciless sun outside in the fields of the Holy Land.⁵⁹

AT CROSSROADS

The recognition of the urban reclusive life style lent anchoresses a status all their own. Recluses were positioned at a crossroads, so to speak, life-long. They lived on a spot where heaven and earth touched, but also where Church and world met. As both a heavenly creature who shared the *vita angelica* with the angels and an earthling who lived in this world with other mortals, a recluse functioned as an intermediary between God and humankind. But as a layperson living in a church building she was also an intermediary between clergy and laity. This gave her a very special status. The sources provide familiar, everyday instances of this in Liège. Illustrative here is an anecdote about Odilia of Liège.

In the time that Odilia was a vowess, she often attended mass in the church of St. Denis. She would choose a place in the back of the church between two pillars and remain sitting there through the entire mass. While showing no outward emotion, she inwardly enjoyed the gifts that God had prepared for her, such as her regained virginal glory. The only person who could see her sitting there and who watched with wonder was the recluse enclosed at the church. One day she called Odilia over to her and asked the reason for her behavior. Odilia told her frankly about her divine gifts. Impressed by what she heard, the recluse brought her in contact with a devout friend.

Here we have a concrete case in which a recluse takes an active interest in her fellow believers and serves as intermediary. However, when the friend began to pay more attention to Odilia than to the recluse herself, the latter became jealous and began to voice suspicions about her to the clergy. She even called in the renowned preacher and reformer John of Liro and the monk Gilbert of Mont Cornillon. It is also at the intersection of clergy and laity, then, that we see this recluse active. She had access not only to the local priest but even to leading churchmen of the bishopric.

As God's envoy she evidently felt responsible for maintaining the standards of religious life, and she successfully called people to account. Fortunately for Odilia, John of Liro saw nothing wrong in what Odilia said, so she was free to go her way.⁶⁰

Eve played a similar role from her anchorhold at St. Martin. She must have had a group of women around her who spoke with her and with one another about their faith. Through Eve these women came into contact with Juliana and her followers at the time when she was still living in Liège.⁶¹ Together the two of them stirred up enthusiasm in the other women for the Feast of the Sacrament. We know that Mary, sister of Steven of Châlons, who was canon at St. Martin, felt a great love for the religious women, *religiosarum personarum dilectrix*, and that she admired Juliana in particular. She was deeply moved by her zeal for the Feast of Corpus Christi. This did not change after Juliana fled to Namur, because Eve, the key figure in the group, remained at her post. When her brother Steven wanted to return to his birthplace in France in his old age, Mary could not bear the thought of "leaving the circle of religious persons in Liège." In 1250, in other words before Hugh of St. Cher announced the festival, she worked at persuading her brother to leave money for a solemn celebration of the feast; and after the solemn Corpus Christi mass conducted by Hugh she wholeheartedly agreed with Steven's decision to earmark a large portion of his benefice for this purpose (1251). There is good reason to believe that Eve was active behind the scenes here. Later Mary herself would recover from a distressing ailment after attending the Feast of Corpus Christi in her own parish church.⁶²

In later years when women visited Eve, she never failed to promote Juliana's cause. She gave two beguines suffering from toothache a linen cloth from Juliana, a *sudarium*, probably a rag full of tears that she kept as a kind of relic. By this action she was not only mediating a small miracle but apparently working toward the canonization of Juliana as well.⁶³ While prelates were usually wary of women's gatherings, we hear of no such problems in the case of recluses; their work of instruction and admonition was generally accepted.

Eve had a knack for dealing with people and guiding them in their spiritual life, and this would have made the women eager to visit her. Especially revealing is the way she cared for Juliana. With loving concern and well-chosen words she always managed to calm Juliana down from her ecstasies and persuade her to talk about them. In this way she helped Juliana clarify what it was that had gripped her so powerfully.⁶⁴ Juliana

was not able to do this on her own. It was for this reason, when shocked by her first visions, that she had looked for an assistant “who thought what she thought and to whom she could confide her inner life, even if it was only half a word.” The famous beguine Isabelle of Huy took on this role, but even she did not comprehend immediately what possessed Juliana. Only after going to Eve—apparently to seek some explanation—did Isabelle receive a vision in the Church of St. Martin showing her the heavenly origin and meaning of Corpus Christi.⁶⁵ For others Eve no doubt played a similar pastoral role.

The preceding examples show clearly how Eve, from her anchorhold at the crossroads of Church and world, came into contact with people, how she talked with them and helped shape their faith. She communicated with people from the circle around the canons, their “housekeepers” like Mary as well as devout women and beguines. We recognize in them the *humiles* that Juliana spoke of in her prophecies. To Eve she had predicted that “the solemn festival would certainly be introduced but by the humble and the poor.” Juliana sensed that her ideas would meet resistance from the clergy but Christ had assured her that it would be disseminated by ordinary people.⁶⁶ It seems that Christ had Eve in mind here—she was also the one who passed this bit of information on to the hagiographer—as much as Juliana herself, for it was people from Eve’s circle who initiated the celebration. This means that Eve was assigned an important role in introducing the festival from the very start. It is not surprising, then, that St. Martin was considered the birthplace of the feast.

At the intersection of the lay world and the Church Eve mediated with prelates and theologians. The following episode is telling. When Robert of Thourotte and Guiard of Laon came to visit Juliana (probably in 1242), it was an extremely trying occasion for her. She did not like high-ranking guests and accused Eve of having urged the two prelates to visit. “If I were able to hate you, recluse, and if I could do that without falling into sin, I would hate you now, I confess to you, for my name would never have reached the courts of prelates if it had not been for you.”⁶⁷ It was Eve, then, who called the bishop and his friends into action, in this case Guiard, the *doctor eucharisticus* who enjoyed great renown in the field of sacramental theology. From our vantage point, of course, it would be a masterstroke to win over this Paris master for the festival—a chance of a lifetime for Juliana. But the ecstatic visionary had no eye for such things; she was not a politician.

Although the *Vita* aims to place Juliana center stage, all the anecdotes veer off in the direction of St. Martin. In modern historiography this is explained by ascribing a key role to John of Lausanne, canon at St. Martin.⁶⁸ Through him, it is maintained, prelates and Paris theologians were won over for the feast. John was indisputably a great admirer of Juliana: the hagiographer, who also owed his commission to John, is the first to affirm this. But contrary to what we might expect, he has very little more to say about this canon. John had “a reputation of great sanctity” and recognized in Juliana a kindred spirit. He at one time told Abbess Imena that she should believe the words of Juliana in the same way that she believed the words of Christ himself. As an exemplary devout person, John “was visited by many and prominent clerics as well as by other religious persons who requested him to pray for them.” This explains why Juliana asked him if he could find out what such people thought about her festival.

In the initial stages John certainly played a role, although he did not necessarily become an active advocate of the Feast of the Sacrament himself.⁶⁹ And we hear little of any further activities. As far as we know, he was not involved in Hugh of St. Cher’s visit to St. Martin in 1251, nor do we hear of him making a donation for the solemn celebration of the feast as some of the other canons did. We can assume that he undertook no action in subsequent years either, for the hagiographer certainly would have reported it. In fact, outside St. Martin he was never—as far as the sources reveal—entrusted with diocesan tasks. We can certainly conclude that he was not a leader type. It appears that only in modern times did John move to the foreground, pushing Eve to the sidelines. According to medieval historians, Eve was the key figure. Jean d’Outremeuse neatly summarizes the medieval view in his perceptive remark: Juliana had worked out the theology of the festival and given it liturgical form; Eve concretized the ideas in her efforts to have the feast celebrated annually in the universal Church. She showed great perseverance and finally achieved her goal, thanks to her special bond with Jacques Pantaleon-Urban IV.⁷⁰ Juliana was the visionary, Eve the strategist, although she could probably hold her own with Juliana on the theological plane as well.

It is worth noting here that Eve and Juliana depended mainly on support from outside the bishopric. Those who became enamored of their ideas were the great minds of the universal Church, scholars and men of vision: the Dominican Hugh of St. Cher and Guiard of Laon in the first round, followed by Jacques Pantaleon and—with some pressuring—Robert

of Thourotte in the second. This says something about the level on which the two women moved and the progressive camp to which they belonged. Moreover, it confirms my hypothesis that these women can better be situated in the context of the universal Church than in that of monasticism.

If we take the *Vita* for what it offers and also listen to what the Liège historians have to say, it appears that Eve was able to translate into an understandable and coherent discourse what Juliana grasped in her flashes of insight. She brought order into the ecstatic images and found words for what had been perceived in the visions. We may wonder about the extent to which she influenced not only the orderly form but also the content of the concrete proposals for Corpus Christi. Who was the thinker and theologian, Juliana alone or Eve as well? In the following section we shall see not only that Eve was a good strategist but also that she articulated a systematic sacramental theology as a basis for the sacramental devotion. In doing so she made a surprising claim for the prophetic authority of women, for Juliana, her assistant Isabelle, and herself. She thus gave creative shape to the other crossroads, that of heaven and earth. We are here treated by Eve to an outstanding example of common theology.

Eve's Theology

The first important chapter that the hagiographer extracted from Eve tells how Juliana went to visit “a person who was extremely dear to her” (Eve, we can assume) on Ascension Day and how she entered a rapt state during the office. Eve heard Juliana speak inwardly—the so-called *jubilus* of religious women⁷¹—and then call out: “my Lord has forsaken me.” After the prayers were finished and Juliana had come to her senses again, “she was overwhelmed with a deep sadness, as if she had been left a lonely orphan. But during the celebration of the Eucharist that followed she was greatly cheered, especially by the words of consolation Christ had left to his disciples together with all faithful, ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’”⁷² Here, in one deft stroke, Eve paints the essence of Juliana’s spirituality and summarizes the sacramental theology that forms the backdrop of the Feast of Corpus Christi, incorporating in passing the key text from Juliana’s office. In subsequent anecdotes she then explicates this introductory passage.

While in the last chapter Eve’s anecdotes were used to illustrate Juliana’s insights, here a more systematic sketch of her own theology is in

place. In the Latin *Vita* the relevant sections are easily recognizable owing to the hagiographer's explicit mention of Eve or "the dear friend in the anchorhold" as his informant. My basic assumption is that the hagiographer deals more or less fairly with Eve. Besides adding traditional Latin tropes, he may have left out certain anecdotes or reworked sections of her text, but when he says that he heard something from "the beloved recluse," I take him at his word and assume that he did not do any real violence to the tenor of her thought. What he presents here is so qualitatively different from the rest of the *Vita*—where he characterizes Juliana's sanctity—and the nature of the material is so intimate that he must have heard it from the person who was closest to Juliana. More difficult to determine is whether Eve is unfolding her own ideas or more or less slavishly reporting Juliana's teachings. In view of Juliana's jumbled ecstatic outpourings described above, I am more inclined to attribute the theological reflection to Eve, even though Juliana was certainly the creative source of the religious ideas.

With Eve as our focus, it is also important to state that Eve was not merely the informant of "authentic" conversations with Juliana. I want to argue that her booklet may have been similar in character to the notebook of her contemporary, Beatrice of Nazareth⁷³ and may have resembled the later compendia of religious men and women, works that have recently been termed *rapiaria* to distinguish them from the intellectual *florilegia* of the monastic school. We could also call them personal exempla books, spiritual diaries containing notes on literature the person had read, both learned and devotional tracts, as well as a record of personal meditations and "exemplary" events. We still have such a booklet by the Ghent prioress Alijt Bake (d. 1455), a kind of autobiography that she reworked from her notes and intended as a spiritual guide for her fellow sisters.⁷⁴

Continuing this line of thought, we must assume that Eve selected in a consistent and systematic way those episodes from Juliana's life that could serve to elucidate Juliana's or her own theological insights. She strings together seemingly innocuous episodes, calling up memories, like the homey anecdote of the apple, lifelike dialogues, even seemingly verbatim renderings of entire conversations between Juliana and herself. She collects anecdotes—often in a liturgical setting—about concrete events rather than abstract arguments.⁷⁵ However, what appears at first sight to be no more than a random collection of anecdotes, memorable only for their colorful detail or the warm affection that speaks from them, is actually much more. Each anecdote is in itself an exemplum intended to

instruct the reader or listener, and the succession of exempla forms a whole that by far exceeds the sum of its parts. It is nothing more or less than a treatise of common theology in exemplum form. As a woman Eve could not write in a discursive or abstract theological mode—that was the prerogative of trained theologians—but she could package a complete theology in unpretentious memories. This was her strategy. Her short, carefully selected, and well-rounded stories are strongly reminiscent of the exempla of her older contemporaries Caesarius of Heisterbach or James of Vitry. Like these great storytellers, she writes her exempla in a simple narrative style—lively, concrete, and emotionally charged. They are intended to explain difficult theological issues in a manner understandable for a public without theological training.

To put it differently, I believe that Eve, like Caesarius and James, deliberately chose this narrative form, the exemplum, and used it to construct solid arguments and unfold a well-thought-out theology.⁷⁶ Like Hadewych or Beatrice, and like the German and English women mystics, she must be taken seriously as an “author.” She composed a literary text, and it deserves to be studied as such, even if this can only be done through the Latin adaptation by our hagiographer.⁷⁷

INCARNATION THEOLOGY

If we want to fully appreciate Juliana’s ideas for a new feast, we must realize that believers experience salvation history by observing the feast days of the liturgical calendar.⁷⁸ The devout felt buoyed up every year when they heard that Mary was going to give birth to the Redeemer; they stood at the manger with tears in their eyes; and they suffered along with Christ in his last days. From deep sadness at his crucifixion they emerged into the relief of Easter. And on Ascension Day, as Eve showed in the exemplum above, they were left behind as orphans. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost evidently offered no real consolation; Juliana, in fact, seems to simply forget about that feast. This is understandable, considering that the Holy Spirit descended mainly onto the heads of priests while the ordinary faithful had to make do with the few brief words of Christ, “I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world.” This called for a joyous festival that would concretize the promise and guarantee Christ’s ongoing presence. The Church year with its emotional milestones needed a grand finale that would give form to the irrevocable presence of

Christ and the indissoluble unity of Christ and his Church. This would have to be a feast celebrating the Corpus Christi. John Bossy makes an important point when he states: "in the diffusion of the Corpus Christi we are dealing with something like the anonymous working-out of an axiom of social theology expressed in ritual: that in a sequence of events intended to create unity, the representation of unity must come at the end."⁷⁹ As an aside, I believe it was mainly this axiom that, consciously or unconsciously, won over prelates with vision for the Corpus Christi feast.

The Ascension Day ecstasy is followed in the *Vita* by the vision of the Trinity. Eve relates that one day she was reading the office with Juliana—apparently they took pleasure in doing this together—and that Juliana, at the moment she spoke the formula of the Trinity (God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), became rapt. Caught up into heaven, she saw with the eyes of her heart, *mundi cordis oculi*, the Trinity in the Unity and the Unity in the Trinity. She thus gained deep insight.

She marveled at what she saw, how the Godhead did not deny the distinction into three Persons while He in his simple substance, essence, and nature, knew of no division. She saw how this supreme Godhead descended in his totality, *tota*, to earth in the incarnation of the Only Begotten Son of the Father and nevertheless remained in his totality, *tota*, in heaven. . . . She saw how Christ in heaven offered himself as food to the individual communicants, totally and completely, *totum integrum et perfectum*, undivided and undiminished, while she also saw that he remained undivided and undiminished in himself.⁸⁰

Here we have the core of Juliana and Eve's theology. Like other *mulieres religiosae*, they were obsessed with the question of the Trinity. To put it simply, their problem was that they could not live without the certainty that God himself had come to earth in his genuine divinity, that God himself had saved them from this vale of tears, and that he himself would also remain with them to the end of time. They were willing to believe in the One almighty God in heaven but were at a loss when it came to God the Son on earth, born of an earthly mother, and even more so when it came to the value of this earthly Son's promises. Visions like those of Juliana—and of Yvette, as we have seen in Chapter 3—were the means that helped the women gain clarity on these matters. For Juliana and Eve, Christ was the Person of the Trinity whose Face was turned toward humanity, fully God like God the Father, with all the accompanying power and might. He ruled in heaven but had not abandoned his people on earth. In the Corpus Christi office they experienced that this complete God was with

them and would always remain with them, that he offered himself to believers in the form of bread and wine, visibly, tangibly, and edibly. At communion all those who took part, like the communicants in Juliana's vision, were briefly guests in heaven partaking of God's own feast. The reservations of Aquinas, with his fear of making the Godhead tangible and palpable, they simply ignored.

My impression is that Eve devoted a great deal of thought to how God could end up in the bread and wine. Her exemplum of the apple indicates her solution: just as the sweet sanctity of Juliana was added to the apple, the Godhead was added to the bread and wine. If this was indeed her interpretation of the Eucharist, she appears to have been more of a "consubstantialist" than a "transsubstantialist."

Women of the time were not particularly drawn to the suffering of their Lord. That became more prevalent in the late Middle Ages—if it was then indeed as dominant a devotional characteristic as is often claimed. Thirteenth-century devout were concerned with the incarnated Godhead. This explains why the Vera Icon or True Face of Christ, of which Eve possessed a copy, the keeping of the consecrated host in the church, for which Eve bore the responsibility at St. Martin, and frequent communion were all equally important to them. For all three Eve provides suitable anecdotes.⁸¹ This preference for an incarnation of the divine in earthly reality had ramifications, as we have seen, for the recluses themselves. Living in the church, they embodied the sacred quality of the church building. They were themselves incarnations of salvation and could, by virtue of their status, pass it on to the faithful around them.

WOMEN'S PROPHETIC AUTHORITY

Caput 20 of the *Vita* contains more than the vision of the Trinity. It also provides a foundation for the authority of visionary women. Meditating on what she had seen in heaven, Juliana "understood most of it with a pure and unblemished intelligence. . . . The One *that teacheth man knowledge* [Ps. 93/94: 10] instructed her so completely in all the articles pertaining to the Catholic faith that there was nothing left on which she would have to consult the masters or the books. And because the [Holy Spirit's] anointing was her teacher, *unctione magistra*, she had received such an indestructible foundation of orthodox faith that she . . . would never be able to deviate from the straight path of that faith." *Unctione*

magistra is a formula that appears five times in the *Vita* and always refers to Juliana's superhuman source of knowledge.⁸² The anointing by the Spirit bestowed true wisdom on persons for whom it was otherwise unattainable. The concept has an important place in the thought of William of St. Thierry, who formulated it in his *Golden Letter* and in his commentary on the Song of Songs, as well as in other works.⁸³ This raises the question of whether there was a conscious borrowing of this idea in the *Vita*.

Like William of St. Thierry, and Hadewych in his footsteps, Eve distinguishes two ways of acquiring knowledge.⁸⁴ There are people with a thirst for learning who continually search for new knowledge, men who like veritable intruders even force their way into the secrets of heavenly majesty. There are also diffident people "who do not boldly blaze their own trail into this sanctum but are invited in." In the first group we recognize the scholastics, in the second the women blessed by God. The Corpus Christi office was written out of a dichotomy of this kind.

Unctione magistra, as presented in Eve's exemplum, provides a foundation for infallible knowledge instilled by God himself in those who have been privileged to receive the unction of the Spirit. These chosen ones receive knowledge of equal value to what the learned derive from books, and they can enter into dialogue with them. They possess knowledge of a prophetic nature. Because they received this knowledge from the Holy Spirit, prophetic women have incontestable authority. They are simply incapable of error or of falling into heterodoxy. Consequently they have no need of any Church authority to keep them in line. They in fact stand above the Church doctors, who in their aggressive pursuit of knowledge can easily err.

I detect a certain contradiction here with the new scholastic vision of prophecy as developed by Hugh of St. Cher and as later worked out by Thomas Aquinas. As pointed out in the last chapter, Hugh, in his *De Prophetia* (ca. 1235) holds prophets themselves responsible for what they say; they cannot pass the buck by pleading an ecstatic state of mind. This also means that they cannot claim their knowledge to be infallible. In keeping with this view, Thomas made it the task of the clergy to judge whether putative prophecies were indeed prophecies and consequently had to be made public. Although the hagiographer neatly sums up the definition of prophecy before citing the many examples of Juliana's prophetic gifts,⁸⁵ he does not follow Hugh here. Does this indicate a point of disagreement between the women and the prelates who supervised them? Considering the obstinacy of the Liège clergy, we can certainly understand

Eve's claim to independent authority. The hagiographer seems to accept this. But Hugh would never have tolerated such an idea.

Unctione magistra requires proof, a visible sign for the prophetic knowledge received. People should be able to see that someone is the recipient of prophetic knowledge. This, in Eve's view, is the function of the mystical ecstasy.⁸⁶ It was not enough, for example, for Juliana to receive visions and pass the instilled knowledge on to Eve and others. Eve also had to be directly "informed" herself,⁸⁷ and she describes how Isabelle, despite Juliana's explanations, failed to see the need for a new festival. Only when she herself was caught up into heaven and God showed her that the feast had always existed in the mystery of the Trinity and that it now had to be revealed to all people did she gain true cognition—"not by hearing it from a fellow human being but by this revelation, by pure wisdom," *non ex auditu ab homine, sed per revelationem et meram cognitionem*⁸⁸—by seeing with the eyes of faith. Eve herself had to wait long for this divine knowledge.⁸⁹ But at the very end of the *Vita*, in the account of the last miracle, it is reported that "a venerable person loved beyond measure by Juliana"—Eve therefore, in my interpretation—was caught up in ecstasy during mass on the day of the Corpus Christi festival: "And she saw the Lord Jesus clothed with the signs of priestly dignity celebrating the mass with great reverence, and his servant Juliana assisting with her virginal hands. It seemed in her ecstasy that she herself went up to the altar and that the high priest, assisted by the virgin, offered her the cup, a splendid and perfect chalice."

Again Eve manages, we might say, to kill two birds with one stone. Juliana rises to almost priestly rank at the end of her series of exempla; she is allowed to assist in the mass during her very own festival. At least Jesus knows her true worth. But most important, this vision provided proof that Eve, too, had prophetic gifts, which meant that she could adequately promote her predecessor's interests on earth. As Juliana had predicted, Eve "became such a fervent supporter of the holy festival that every delay almost literally tormented her."⁹⁰ In my judgment, we should view this last short chapter as the culmination of both Eve's own *Fragmenta* and the Latin *Vita*, the presentation of Juliana as a new saint in heaven and of Eve as a living saint on earth. She had announced and symbolically enacted this at the beginning of her career with the enclosure ritual. She had then been released from the sinful world and admitted into the company of angels. Now the potential implied in that rite was realized to the full.

The Prophetess in the Anchorhold

To sum up, both in the oral community of the faithful and in learned scholastic theology visionary or prophetic women could acquire great authority. Believers came to them and accepted their guidance in the shaping of their own religious life. They listened to their “preaching” and took their prophetic exhortations to heart. Church authorities were more suspicious, but reform-minded clerics among them certainly showed a willingness to converse with them. Enlightened by God himself, the women possessed knowledge equal in value to that of the theologians and could therefore not easily be ignored. If the women in addition had the benefit of a solid education and were capable of articulating religious needs in theological jargon, they developed into common theologians of stature and could enter into dialogue with Church reformers as equals.

Recluses had a special place among the prophetic women. During their enclosure rite they were released from the sinful world and ritually transported to the life beyond. Admitted into the company of angels, they might then be allowed by God to see heavenly wisdom, to acquire true prophetic knowledge. They lived at an intersection of heaven and earth and incarnated the salvation that flowed to that place. With them people found a ray of happiness in this earthly vale of tears. The reputation of recluses was beyond question. It was no problem for the canons of St. Martin to accept Eve as their guide, and she was even recognized by the pope. The situation was very different for women who were not enclosed; Hadewych and Juliana both encountered serious problems. In the remaining section I will try to bring into sharper historical focus the question of why recluses were successful while other religious women were not.

EVE BUT NOT JULIANA

The first and foremost difference between Juliana and Eve can be traced to their respective childhoods. As an orphan Juliana had been brought up in a convent that had neither order nor rule. There she could study to her heart's content and develop her religious talents. She had her own oratory outside the actual boundaries of the convent where she could cultivate her own sanctification in the forms that suited her, in extreme asceticism but according to her own discretion. Although as prioress she demanded that young girls conform to her religious ideal, she did not impose strict

monastic discipline with a prescribed rule, nor did she take eternal vows. It is questionable whether she was really happy with the introduction of the Augustinian Rule in 1242. We know in any case that with the return of Prior John “the Bad” after the death of Robert of Thourotte she refused obedience. When the brothers reminded her sharply that she had to obey this lawfully elected prior, she replied provocatively, *Nequaquam*, never—hardly a compliant answer for a prospective saint.⁹¹ And she left the convent, which was contrary to all the rules and probably not really necessary.⁹² In Namur she refused to place herself in obedience to Imena, despite all the efforts made by Imena on her behalf. Only on the urging of the old bishop Guiard of Laon and after the death of her fellow sisters did she obey—but only as long as there was no real alternative. After Imena’s convent had been forced to flee to the Ardennes, she again chose to work independently on her own sanctification, this time in the anchorhold of Fosses.⁹³

This willful behavior did bring Juliana two kinds of serious problems. First, because her way of life was not beyond reproach, at least in the eyes of the bishop-elect and his cohorts, Juliana’s claim to prophetic authority could be ignored. In the city she was sneered at as a *sompniatrix*, a dreamer, a deadly insult for a woman with religious ambition.⁹⁴ Indignities of this sort, when interpreted as martyrdom for the just cause by her hagiographer, could bring her sainthood—but only after her death.⁹⁵ Eve was immune to gibes of this kind. She sat untouchable in her anchorhold, protected physically by the cell wall and mentally by the sacredness of her function.

The second type of problem was of a more subtle nature. In medieval society all women were taught from their earliest years to be subservient and always to listen meekly without immediately countering with an opinion of their own. Modesty was a womanly virtue. We saw this in the case of the young woman Yvette, when she had to appear before the bishop, and we see it again with Juliana. The long years of indoctrination threatened to destroy all assertiveness, even in situations where some was expected. When Juliana was visited by men of high rank, for example, she protested that she was just a kitchen maid and a sinner. When a prelate once asked her which sins she had committed, she replied, “Perhaps all of them.” The hagiographer knew, of course, that this was said out of sheer humility, but the visitor was taken off guard: “He went away indignant.”⁹⁶ If he had been visiting a recluse, the specific setting, the sacredness of the place, would very likely have led him to a correct interpretation of her words.

This lack of assertiveness was a more widely recognized problem. Hadewych speaks of it in her letters to a friend living outside the beguine community. "At all times and in every way be meek, but not so meek that you become rather foolish and abandon the truth and justice that you can achieve. Truly I say to you: a person who does not stand up for the truth because he wants to be meek will have to pay with the truth."⁹⁷ But even Hadewych herself, with all her assertiveness, succumbed to the pressures. Charismatically gifted women living in the world were not allowed to show modesty, even less to assert their own ideas. Actually, only those women who operated from a recognizable setting succeeded in propagating their ideas. The recluse's cell offered such a context.

Even more important was that an anchorhold offered the loftiness and sacredness associated with the reclusive life. The words of an anchoress by definition carried prophetic power. Urban IV alluded to this in his bull to Eve: "your eyes have seen the salvation." He recognized the special position of the recluse and the authority connected with her position. And he even attempted to use this to his own advantage. By sending Eve the new office, not that of Juliana but of Thomas Aquinas, and asking her to distribute it, he was taking a gamble that she, with her prestige, would manage to win over the community in Liège for the new liturgy. He lost his bet. Until 1509 the festival of Juliana and Eve was celebrated in St. Martin according to the old liturgy in the forms they had devised.

Lame Margaret of Magdeburg and Her Lessons

These words recorded here are not capable of containing all the praise of God. Yet they have been written down so that we may perceive at least something of God's goodness. When Margaret herself came to know the words written here she felt the praise of God in her heart out of gratitude.

IN THE MID-THIRTEENTH CENTURY the Magdeburg Dominican John devoted a saint's Life to his confessant the anchoress Margaret, also known as Lame Margaret of Magdeburg (ca. 1210–ca. 1250).¹ His book contains both much more and much less than an ordinary saint's Life of an ordinary recluse—much more because it was written during her lifetime, and in a form that apparently met her approval. Seldom are we able to study a medieval *Vita* that was “authorized” by its subject. John's intention, as we shall see, was to record the oral lessons of the anchoress for posterity, lessons for which she herself in her anchorhold formed the living proof. “Lessons from the book of life” we might call them, experiential knowing. As the quotation above makes clear, however, John was painfully aware that such lessons by their very nature were difficult to capture in words. They could actually be transmitted only from person to person, from heart to heart, and not by means of the written word. What lived in Margaret's heart became a dead letter in John's book. His text is for this reason also much less than a normal saint's Life because it attempted the impossible. Instead of following the success formula of the genre and initiating veneration for a dead saint, it tried to bring readers in touch with a living saint. In doing so it sketched even less of the subject's personal life story than other saints' Lives.

Because there are scarcely any other, supplementary sources for Lame

Margaret, we have to make do with John's text. But before we can analyze Margaret's life work in Magdeburg's community of the faithful, a good deal of historical craftsmanship is needed to reconstruct her life story hidden underneath John's hagiographic packaging. We then discover to our satisfaction, however, that nowhere do we come closer to an anchoress herself than in this text. Why she opted for the anchorhold, how she envisioned her religious role, what kind of theology she developed, what she taught her fellow believers—about all these things we can form an opinion, thanks to John's treatise. And as an encore, the fifteen surviving copies, versions, and translations of the *Vita*, all of which originated in the lowlands of my research area, give us a glimpse of the reader response and the carry-over of her ideas in later generations.

Biography

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FACTS

Margaret must have been born and raised in the urban milieu of Magdeburg, a flourishing commercial center in the thirteenth century. The city was the see of an important archbishopric in the German empire, with a cathedral and a Church of Our Lady in the old town center and with a bustling commercial Neustadt (new town), where merchants lived and worked alongside communities of mendicant monks and religious women. It was here that Franciscans and Dominicans founded the first mendicant settlements of northern Germany in 1224.²

Deformed from early childhood and despised by her own family, the young Margaret sought refuge in a devout life. Together with a blind servant girl she made daily visits to the parish church. The pious pair were the butt of many jokes among workmen and passers-by: "Look at that," they would call out to each other, "the lame leading the blind."³ At the age of twelve she made her choice for the anchoritic existence. Her mother agreed and had a cell arranged for her at St. Alban's Church on the Broadway in the old town, near the cathedral and the Church of Our Lady.⁴ The family must therefore have been reasonably well off. Margaret did have some reservations about the reclusive state because it would bring her fame and honor, while she sought complete self-effacement for the greater glory of God.⁵ But the prospect of devoting herself totally to God outweighed her hesitations.

In the anchorhold she led a life of total renunciation, contrition, and self-contempt, all of which entailed extreme suffering.⁶ According to her biographer, she did this not in order to win the forgiveness of sins or a place in heaven, as other religious did. She simply wanted to give God the glory due to him.⁷ Ascetic exercises or other “meritorious” works she was unable and unwilling to perform.⁸ Such practices she considered egoistic self-justification, while she wished to focus solely on the grandeur of God. She would even have chosen to live in hell if that had been pleasing to God.⁹ All this self-abnegation deprived her of every grain of self-esteem. She felt herself a nonperson and was oppressed by a sense of worthlessness. The remorse she felt brought no comfort, only a growing sense of despair. She was unable to love God. Even though other religious in her surroundings shared feelings of this kind (see below), in thirteenth-century Magdeburg such self-contempt was viewed as a form of pride. People avoided her. Loneliness and a feeling of total abandonment filled her days. She was a prisoner of despondency. In few other *Vitae* of anchoresses does the despair, the utter loneliness and helplessness, speak so clearly as in this biographical sketch.

In 1224 the Dominicans took up residence on the same Broadway in the old town, opposite the cathedral. It seems likely that the author of the *Vita*, the Dominican John, came into contact with Margaret at this time and offered to be her spiritual adviser. This fact gives us some historical foothold. Since Margaret had by then been enclosed for two years—the whole time without spiritual support—she must have been born around 1210 and enclosed in 1222, if we go by the numbers given in the *Vita*.¹⁰ In the course of his account John also relates that at a certain moment Margaret had not yet reached the age at which the Lord died. Christ told her: “When you reach the age at which I died, prepare yourself to die and be of good hope that it will then not be long.” That must have been some time between 1240 and 1250.¹¹

If we accept this reconstruction, Margaret must have been exactly the same age as her famous contemporary Mechthild of Magdeburg, and she must have lived in the city in the same decades. It is assumed that Mechthild was born around 1208 and came to Magdeburg in 1230. Since she, too, was under Dominican supervision, it is almost unthinkable that the two never came into contact with each other.¹² A third mystic lived in the city during those same years, the Dominican Wichmann of Arnstein. The few letters of his that have survived breathe the same spirituality as

that of Mechthild and Margaret.¹³ In other words, there were three more or less kindred spirits, all living in the Dominican circle in what by our standards was a small town. Could they possibly have walked right past each other?

We do not hear how long Margaret lived after about 1245, as the author says nothing about her death. Did she perhaps survive him?¹⁴ Since Mechthild mentions a deceased anchoress in one of her exempla written between 1250 and 1260, a figure who in my opinion could well have been Lame Margaret, I assume that she must have died at the latest around 1250. This is confirmed by the dating of the oldest surviving manuscript containing the *Vita*: 1270 or perhaps 1280. John must have written her Life a good many years earlier.¹⁵

UNDER DOMINICAN GUIDANCE

In keeping with Dominican practice, John took over the spiritual supervision of Margaret. He would later confess that he had little understanding of her inner life; she struck him as strange, even self-destructive. "Why do you torture yourself so?" he sneered. "If you really want to die why don't you take an axe and with one blow chop off your head?"¹⁶ At first John believed that Margaret should observe the usual practices of the religious life. He ordered her to watch and fast. She obediently followed his advice, even though it cost her the last remnant of her health. Then John realized that inner asceticism was more important than outer forms. The Dominican often refused to hear her confession and to grant her absolution. At times he stayed away from her for as long as three or four years, he tells us himself. Later, when he had acquired more understanding of Margaret's religious life, he regretted this. He then compared her with the devout men and women in Brabant and saw in her an even greater mystic than they.¹⁷

John's strictness was completely in line with the rules in his order. Humbert of Romans, for example, had declared that a Dominican confessor should keep a tight rein on women. "Let him restrain those [women] who are called beguines, and wish to confess frequently, and let him assign to them a set time for confession, outside of which he will not hear them, nor let him ever make himself available to them in other frequent conversations, and always let him use rather harsh and rigid words

towards them, rather than soft words.”¹⁸ In the case of Lame Margaret, we see how this policy could have disastrous effects. Later it was changed.

John came to realize that he had acted wrongly. With disarming honesty he confesses his initial shortcomings. I surmise that this change of heart was the fruit of the open communication between Margaret and John and the interaction between Dominicans and devout women in Saxony generally. We see further evidence of this in the collaboration between Mechthild and Henry of Halle, and in the correspondence of Wichmann of Arnstein—to be discussed later.

AND THE GUIDANCE OF MARY

Yet Margaret’s spiritual guidance had to come from another quarter. Immediately after her enclosure, in other words, before John entered the scene, Christ had taken her under his wing and entrusted her to His own Mother as a teacher of the truth, *doctrix veritatis*: “Jesus Christ immediately gave her his own Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, as teacher in the truth. Not the blessed Peter or any other saint, no, His own sweetest and most beloved and glorious Mother. She took the poor creature into her care and taught her to read, *apposuit eam ad litteras*. She condescended to become her instructor and teacher of the most illuminating truth, *doctrix eius et magistra*.”¹⁹

If we can believe the *Vita*, a close bond developed between the two. Mary showed Margaret how a true Christian should behave; she taught her to feel remorse and gratitude and to be receptive to the love of her Son. She saw to it that Margaret experienced a complete forgiveness of sins.²⁰ Thanks to Mary, Margaret acquired a generally accepted erudition. She was evidently able to read and perhaps received further education from her anchorhold in the cathedral complex. Mary’s legitimation enabled her to then use this knowledge in her dealings with her fellow townspeople. Later on she undoubtedly profited from conversations with learned visitors as well. In 1225, for example, the general chapter of Dominicans was held in Magdeburg, an occasion that drew men like Jordanus of Saxony and perhaps the young Albertus Magnus to the city. In visionary conversations with Christ and his Mother and through mystical insights Margaret developed further into a theologian of great boldness. She acquired an eye for the needs of her fellow believers and realized that it was her task to mingle in the religious life of the town.

REACHING OUT

Margaret saw it as her special task to help people find their way along the path of life. As John formulated it: "And often she called great public sinners to her and spent all her strength on them. And totally exhausted herself in this. . . . To all persons who were oppressed or suffering she was sympathetic. And to all persons who felt joy and gladness she was sympathetic. . . . And she at times thought she had such great wisdom, that even if all the oppressed hearts of the world had stood before her, she would have comforted them all well, each one according to his circumstances."²¹ She did not consider herself a contemplative bride of Christ who could quietly love God and for the rest pay no attention to anything or anyone. This was what others advised her to do and what a special demon—was it John?—held up to her as a temptation.²² Instead, Margaret insisted that she had to provide instruction for her fellow believers and teach them the basic tenets of Christian doctrine; it was her responsibility to convey God's grace.²³ She found support for her conviction in Christ, who regularly sent dejected souls and sinners to her. She also asked: "Send me people whom I can instruct and teach [*quos possim instruere et docere*], so that they can arrive at knowledge of the true love for You." And God/Christ consented: He would send her people "who wish to follow your teaching [*qui volunt sequi doctrinam tuam*]." At one time He even said: "I created you so that My goodness can manifest itself in you; you are a teacher of love."²⁴ The pastorate she developed was tailored for each person: "God granted her to know why He was punishing certain people. When they then came to her, she knew how to explain to each one the reason why God was scourging them. And just as there was manifold punishment for them, there was also manifold knowledge for her, which God imparted to her with the intention that she convey it to others."²⁵

Mary, too, sent people to her. Once the Virgin appeared to a woman who had been sick for five years and was now near death, saying to her, "Do you not know that mother, *matrem illam*, who lives in the anchorhold? Her pious devotion compels me to hear all her prayers." Margaret was overjoyed to hear that Mary had called her, Margaret, "mother."²⁶ She saw this as a clear legitimation to act as Mary's representative on earth. We are reminded here of the ideas put forward by Yvette. The heavenly Mother authorized devout women entrusted to her by Christ to act on her behalf as earthly mothers—in Margaret's case, as an earthly mother figure in the spiritual sense.

She also began to instruct John and set forth the mystical wisdom instilled in her.²⁷ Slowly but surely he came under the spell of her charismatic personality. They became attached to each other and no longer wanted to be separated. "Often she told him things unheard of," he writes, "a joy to listen to."²⁸ But at other times he understood nothing of what she was saying. He legitimized her actions with a reference to the mocked prophet of the Old Testament: "She could rightly say with the prophet Jeremiah (20: 9): 'His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones.'" He implies here that Margaret could not act much differently from Jeremiah: "and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay."²⁹

Margaret summarized her lessons in salient points and handy lists short enough for everyone to memorize easily—the five qualities of a good Christian, the five requirements of a good prayer, the seven torments of hell, the seven preparations for receiving Holy Communion, the ten virtues, the twelve attributes of the Trinity, Mary's twelve words of gratitude, and so forth.³⁰ They were point-by-point summaries that catered to the needs of illiterate faithful who had grown up in an oral culture. The lists could very quickly be committed to memory. In Mechthild's work we find similar lists and verses. The two women show that they were themselves formed by an oral culture; they knew that a living example and easily digestible chunks of knowledge had a much greater effect than the high-flown discourse of theologians. With much greater skill than the learned priests they touched the minds and hearts of their fellow believers. Even though parish priests were supposed to preach regularly after the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), they often produced no more than abstract disquisitions and rhetorical fireworks. They had learned nothing else. Serious students in Paris felt this to be a great shortcoming. This explains why young men like James of Vitry and Thomas of Cantimpré came to Brabant to sit at the feet of Mary of Oignies and Lutgart of Tongeren—and why John became a pupil of Margaret. But in writing his account he differed from the other two men in that he made no attempt to gloss over the learned lessons of his teacher with pious phrases such as "Mary sought a preacher who could speak in her name."³¹ Instead, he simply wrote down what Margaret taught. And as a visual aid, so to speak, he added the living example of Margaret. This combination of learned lesson and lived faith is the most remarkable feature of his text.

With growing self-confidence and forcefulness Margaret began to act as the religion teacher of the Magdeburgers and the mediator of their

salvation. She was convinced that God considered it praiseworthy to hear her prayers and therefore wanted Him to hear all prayers for her sake. That people could be released from their sins through her assistance gave her great satisfaction, and it annoyed her if they did not take her lessons to heart.³² She realized that she might be acting too boldly and held discussions about this with herself and Christ. When she wondered if she was elect, she heard Christ say that with him and his Mother she was elevated above everyone else. Yet she questioned herself: why do you want to deprive God of his honor? You are only a servant, *ancilla*, the vessel in which grace is conveyed or the messenger who delivers the message.³³

Not only John was highly critical; others were as well. Some accused her of pride, *sancta superbia*. Others called her garrulous and a twaddler; they scoffed that she was assembling a whole “hospital” of people at her cell.³⁴ She always claimed to suffer from pain and fainting spells, they gossiped, but managed to appear promptly at her window as soon as someone showed up there. This eventually led to a crisis when she let cunning visitors—probably clerics—lure her into making dubious statements.³⁵ These persons then urged John to have her removed from the cell in the town center. John thought it advisable to bring her, with the permission of the archbishop, to his own Dominican convent. There she would be sealed away from the world, at least temporarily, and after her death she could be buried there as well. Apparently he was convinced that Lame Margaret would become a saint and could then prove beneficial to his community. But Margaret herself fought this imprisonment tooth and nail. She realized that the clergy in the old town regarded her with suspicion and contempt, but if she had to be removed she preferred to go to the Agnes convent in the Neustadt, the former residence of the Dominicans and since 1229 a Cistercian women’s convent under their supervision. Many other religious women and beguines had settled there in the meantime, among them possibly Mechthild of Magdeburg. There Margaret hoped to find a fertile and stimulating environment.³⁶ In the end, she succeeded in having John place her there.

And there she did find peace. She was now past thirty, in other words approaching the age of those older and wiser, and felt more drawn to mystical contemplation than before. After helping one of the critical nuns find spiritual peace, she found herself with a devoted group of supporters in the women’s convent.³⁷ Her years of struggle and despair were over. Now that she no longer had to prove herself, she lost the sharp, self-willed edges of her character, her *propria voluntas*, and she could concentrate on

her essential task: to gather true wisdom, *cognitio*, and pass it on to her fellow believers.³⁸ While she had previously looked forward to talks with her spiritual friends, she now came into action only if God asked her to do so.³⁹ Here, too, her life resembles that of Yvette after she found the sublime peace of the anchorhold. Margaret lived as on the eve of heavenly bliss and already enjoyed true, heavenly wisdom, just as the glad celebrations of a feast day begin with the vigils of the preceding evening.⁴⁰ Eventually even her critics found her life praiseworthy—and so the story ends. John summarized the most important points one more time: the ten kinds of virtues about which Margaret had gathered knowledge and of which she was the living proof, humility first of all.⁴¹ He relates that in this phase of her life Margaret enjoyed such intimacy with God that even painful lessons were superfluous, as if after long years of marriage Margaret needed no more than a glance or half a word.⁴² She now no longer envisioned true wisdom in earthly images but enjoyed direct *cognitio*, a form of insight that embraced head and heart and could only be “lived.”⁴³ John concludes: “And just as Jesus went public with his teaching around the age of thirty, and many began to follow his teaching, she bore in her heart the conviction that around her thirtieth year, too, the grace with which God had imbued her would manifest itself and many would follow her teaching.”⁴⁴

Just how long Margaret was able to enjoy this status in Magdeburg falls outside the plot of John’s story.

John the Dominican and the Character of His Work

About the author, John the Dominican, we know no more than what he tells us himself in the *Vita*. We do know a great deal, however, about Dominicans as counselors of devout women. Despite the aversion felt by the leaders of the order to pastoral duties, German Dominicans eagerly assumed the task of confessor for devout women.⁴⁵ The theological boldness and spiritual creativity of the *mulieres religiosae* must have attracted these learned men.⁴⁶ Gradually the collaboration also came to be viewed more positively by the Dominican leaders themselves. Informal religious bonds developed between men and women, which existed almost exclusively in the oral circuit. Only sporadically do we find traces of them in the written sources, as when James of Vitry confesses that he learned preaching from Mary of Oignies. Or when Juliana and Eva in Liège appear

to share their ideas with prominent scholastics. Or when Mechthild of Magdeburg speaks highly of the Dominicans and her teamwork with Henry of Halle, and when John talks about learning from Lame Margaret. As long as scholars continue to let themselves be influenced by nineteenth-century traditions that presented mystical women as locked away behind convent walls—living, as they assumed, in total seclusion—and to view them as celestial enigmas who fell outside the bounds of earthly life, they will never develop an eye for these relationships. Hans Urs von Balthasar, for example, described Mechthild as an embodiment of “eine scheue, wilde Adlerfreiheit” (shy, untamed, eagle-like freedom).⁴⁷

The solidarity between priests and women was in fact considerable and the networks of theologians (male and female) reached across the borders of Brabant, Liège, and Saxony, as is evident from John’s remark that Margaret could compete with the devout women of Brabant; or from Hadewych’s list of perfect persons, which places an anchoress in Saxony beside an anchorite in Paris. Hadewych also reports sending one of her acquaintances, a certain Henry of Breda, to this anchoress in Saxony, thus giving a concrete instance of how the network functioned.⁴⁸ The same picture of a broad cultural circle emerges from the distribution of the manuscripts in which the *Life of Lame Margaret* is preserved, and from the many similarities between the work of Hadewych, the Brabant *mulieres religiosae*, and Lame Margaret. It is time to view these as more than coincidental parallels; they are the fruit of dynamic interaction, in either oral or written form. It is against this background of broad and mutual inspiration that we must view the author John and his work.

Unlike the great church reformers James of Vitry and Thomas of Cantimpré or the learned hagiographer of Juliana of Cornillon, John did not shape his confessant into the model saint, nor did he force her into the mold of the virgin martyr. He also ignored old formulas for composing a model *Vita*. He may have been unable to make use of them, but my impression is that he was also unwilling to do so. His shaky command of Latin and possibly his unfamiliarity with the new women’s *Vitae* kept him from falling into this convention and made him instead what appears to be a reliable recorder of Margaret’s words. His personal involvement further reinforced this approach. As a result we have at our disposal a document in which two believers, a woman and a man, representatives of two different worlds, the lived Christianity of the *imitatio morum* and the written culture of the Church, tried to capture the lived truth of the one in the written truth of the other. God Himself, John writes, gave them the

assurance that such could be done, albeit imperfectly—witness the epigraph that begins this chapter. He could also have quoted the words of Mechthild:

Ich enkan noch mag nit schriben, ich sehe es mit den ögen miner sele und höre es mit den oren mines ewigen geistes und bevinde in allen liden mines lichamen die kraft des heiligen geistes.

[I neither can nor wish to write, (for) I see it with the eyes of my soul and hear it with the ears of my eternal spirit and experience in all the members of my body the power of the Holy Spirit.]⁴⁹

Like Margaret, Mechthild wrestled not only with the resistance of people around her but also with her inability to capture the total religious experience in words. But she, too, felt called by God to do so nevertheless. And God was so kind as to take upon himself the final responsibility for the imperfect product.⁵⁰ He did the same when Margaret and John ventured an attempt with his support, appointing John as the earthly writer and calling himself the actual *scriptor*.⁵¹ What I sense here is not so much an appeal to direct inspiration as a realization that it was God's will to have Margaret's experiences put in writing, and in a form that would be guaranteed authority in the Church, for as a hagiographical text it would by definition be included in the canon of sacred texts.⁵²

Like the mother of Guibert and the women in Liège, Mechthild and Margaret, and some of the men around them as well, lived in a culture in which people were accustomed to passing on knowledge and insights in encounters between two persons. Observing good habits or listening to good words were the favored means of teaching people how to behave or instilling in them what they were supposed to know. Books, to the extent that they were available, functioned as memory props. Only within the sphere of the Church and theology were books and Scripture themselves the bearers of truth. But those were Latin texts of a rather esoteric nature for the devout women and the urban faithful.⁵³ A notable feature of the thirteenth century, however, was that people were coming under the spell of the authority of the book. Women began to wonder how they could record their inspired messages, which they considered of equal value to the written Message of the Church and deserving of the same kind of authority. Writing on the model of professional theologians was no option, of course. Mechthild and the other women who wrote themselves

chose the vernacular and exemplumlike texts. Eve of St. Martin and Beatrice of Nazareth also chose this route. Like the popular preachers, they stayed close to the oral genres. They claimed that God attached an authority to their writing equal to that of a Latin treatise or a saint's Life—but this was true only for those in their audience who gave credence to their claim. John and Margaret opted for the form of the saint's Life, a genre that in itself could command authority, although they proceeded to give it a rather unconventional twist. They composed a text that in its content fell somewhere between a hagiographic tract (in Latin) and a mnemonic booklet (in the vernacular), between a continuous life story and a collection of exempla. They claimed for it the authority and the truth of a Latin canonical text. The short exempla automatically acquired the character of exempla in a sermon: they "happened" at the moment they were read (aloud).⁵⁴

John first presents Margaret meditating in front of her crucifix. Before her inner eye, *oculis spiritualibus*, he writes, she saw Christ hanging on the cross, with one foot upon the other and his arms spread wide. We recognize here the new type of crucifix gaining ground in northwest Europe at this time. Now it is not Christ the King, who appears almost to be standing in front of the cross with both feet on the ground, but the suffering Christ, hanging on the cross by his nailed hands and with a single nail through both feet—the crucifix known as the Three-Nail Type. Margaret interpreted this painful position as a symbol of the unfathomable humility of the Lord, *abissum humilitatis*, while his outstretched arms seemed eager to embrace the whole world. In the height of the cross she envisioned high wisdom and her own desire for the greater glory of God. She would in turn proclaim that knowledge to her fellow human beings. John in this way summarized Margaret's great task, which he would describe in the rest of the *Vita*.⁵⁵

He then recorded Margaret's teachings, received during her talks with God or Mary. These resemble scraps of overheard conversation. When believers read them or heard them read aloud they could experience them for themselves before their inner eye. Margaret wondered, for example, why God had allowed the Fall: "Lord, one can hardly say that the Fall is to your credit. Why did you create human beings in such a way that they could fall?" He answered: 'It is reasonable that I create everything in conformity with myself. [Therefore with a free will.] While I knew in advance that people would be disobedient, I gave them the chance to obey Me, rather than that I caused their Fall.' Then Margaret went on to

ask . . .”⁵⁶ Whenever possible, John immediately illustrates the point with Margaret’s own example.⁵⁷ She was the living proof of the teachings she presented. At times he also describes Margaret’s meditations on Bible passages. Especially the Sermon on the Mount, with the verse “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” struck a deeply sympathetic chord with the anchoress. In other chapters he summarizes miscellaneous ideas of his confessant. He introduces these by saying, “She then began to ponder what it was that . . .,” or “Once she sat alone and wondered in her heart . . .”⁵⁸

Finally he also noted down, seemingly on his own authority, short texts in the form of tracts. These are expositions of Christian doctrine or devotional knowledge, recorded without any form of introduction. *Quid dedit trinitas homini?* for example, “What Did the Trinity Give to Humankind,” a tract about the twelve properties of God; and *Septem sunt pene inferni*, “Sevenfold Are the Torments of Hell,” a short tract accompanied by a spiritual application.⁵⁹ I counted half a dozen of these, more than ten printed pages. They are early forms of the devotional tracts widely known and loved in the late Middle Ages. A few of them were included in the manuscript from Ter Cameren that also contains the oldest text of Margaret’s *Vita*.⁶⁰ This can hardly be a coincidence. In a single hagiographic text, then, John combined features of Latin theological tracts with those of oral and vernacular dialogue texts and exempla. The *Vita* thus almost takes on the character of a compendium, a catechism for believers. This, in my opinion, accounts for the later success of the text.

Viewed as a whole, the work can hardly be termed a *Vita*. What it most resembles is the set of notes by Philip of Clairvaux about his encounter with the astonishing Elisabeth of Spalbeek or the writings of Peter of Dacia about the equally astonishing Christina of Stommeln. But as a Dominican John could hardly been unaware of the work of his confreres in the Low Countries. He most likely knew about Thomas of Cantimpré, also a Dominican, who around 1230 wrote the *Life of Christina the Astonishing*, followed ten years later by the *Life of Margaret of Ypres* and the *Life of Lutgart of Tongeren*. When writing about Margaret of Ypres, Thomas still had great difficulty capturing in words this woman’s spirituality and specific mysticism.⁶¹ In his later *Vita* of Lutgart of Tongeren he managed this much more successfully. There, like John, he uses the term *cognitio* for knowledge acquired through inspiration rather than learning—an indication, in my view, that John may have known this work. Thomas also found a way to describe Lutgart’s ecstasies by assuming the

stance of a rather distanced observer. According to scholars like Karin Glente and John Coakley, Thomas and other hagiographers of women did feel great admiration but also a certain awe and dismay on seeing these women in trance. They were attracted by the obvious nearness of God that the women experienced but watched it all as spectators. It made them envious, for they had great difficulty in “surrendering themselves” in this way. But it also led them to increasingly pin the women down as ecstatic mystics and impose a pattern on them that, in Glente’s view, probably did not come from the women themselves.⁶² John did not follow this course; he showed more respect for Margaret as she was. That makes his text all the more interesting for us.

John’s text takes on even greater importance when we realize that it went unnoticed until recently. The Bollandists knew the work but decided not to include it in the *Acta Sanctorum*.⁶³ Margaret’s activities must have struck them as having little edifying value and as being unsuitable as a model for the pious virgins and mothers of their own time. They in any case found no reason to override the formal objections—no ecclesiastical feast day, no clear veneration of Margaret after her death. Even the existence of a Latin *Vita* in many copies and versions, a fact that always tipped the scales in favor of “devout” pious virgins, did not give them second thoughts. Margaret therefore remained beyond the horizon of modern scholarship until Paul Gerhard Schmidt published a critical edition in 1992. It came too late to discredit the notion that medieval religious women were always silent, contemplative brides of Christ.

Margaret’s Theology

THE ABYSS

John presents Lame Margaret as the anchoress of the human deficit. During her first years in the cell Margaret was convinced that she fell short in everything. Stubbornly concentrating on the glory and honor of God, she did not allow herself any satisfaction in her attempts to praise the Lord—that, she thought, would be depriving God of the glory due him. At every moment she was aware that she could never do enough. She crept away into feelings of misery, as if into the deepest abyss, and believed she deserved to go to hell. She was actually in good company, for others felt

as she did; but in her, a simple anchoress, it undermined all sense of self-worth. She thus came to shortchange herself as well. Her first years in the anchorhold must indeed have been a veritable hell.

This point is driven home by the short exemplum "Machteld and the Anchoress," which circulated in later centuries and, in my view, refers to Margaret and her fellow townswoman Mechthild. It was written down by Alijt Bake (d. 1455), a Windesheim prioress from Ghent, who saw in Mechthild and Margaret inspiring foremothers.⁶⁴ A certain Machteld, Bake tells us, daughter of a king, "herself served our dear Lord very devotedly and lived out in the fields in a poor, small house, where our dear Lord often came to visit her." Beguines did, in fact, live in the fields outside Magdeburg, near the St. Gertrude Chapel, before Archbishop Albrecht moved them into the Agnes convent in the Neustadt around 1230. There Machteld received a message from the anchoress, "a sister who lived not far from there. And who was always oppressed and suffering and did not have such [mystical] visitations from God as this Machteld, and felt very dejected about this in herself?" Margaret was apparently afraid that the Lord was granting her no mystical encounters because of inadequacies in her religious life. She asked Machteld to inquire of Christ "whether her life pleased him." There follows a touching exchange between Christ and Machteld in which he reminds her: wasn't there something you wanted to ask me? He then says that the anchoress does indeed please him greatly, even more than Machteld herself: "No matter how much suffering and how many burdens I heap upon her and how disconsolate I let her become, she does not turn away from me."

We recognize Margaret here in the period before she received visions herself. The devil would torment her with remarks like: "What do you hope to achieve with God by praising him? He cares nothing about you. He does not comfort you in the way he comforts others."⁶⁵ Despite her stubborn perseverance in prayer and praise, she was deeply despondent at heart. Mechthild herself also mentions a beguine in her work, "who loved our Lord with all her heart, and she practiced this love with such superhuman effort that her bodily strength declined to the point of death." According to Mechthild, this woman's headstrong ways and her refusal to listen to good advice led her to overreach herself. But God quickly forgave her.⁶⁶ This, too, points in the direction of Margaret.

Two conclusions can be drawn from these moving exempla. First, the preoccupation with a personal deficit was evidently not unique to Margaret. Mechthild also struggled with such feelings, as did Wichmann of

Arnstein in Magdeburg and Hadewych in Brabant. Later we also find them in Meister Eckhart and Marguerite Porete. It was part of what McGinn has called the theology of the "abyss." The paralyzing awareness that a human being is nothing compared with the greatness of God can drain a person of all courage. Hadewych warns of this: "Reason knows that one must fear God and that God is great and humankind small. If reason then fears the greatness of God in relation to its [own] smallness, and fails to take hold of the greatness of God and begins to doubt that it will become the dearest child of God, thinking that it is not worthy of such a great being: this is the reason why many people fail to take hold of a great being. In this reason errs and in many more matters as well."⁶⁷

This was apparently threatening to happen to Margaret in her first years in the anchorhold. But the feelings of total insignificance also worked the other way. A person aware of her own fathomless abyss also knew herself the lowest point and the hollow space to which God's grace flowed. Margaret's Magdeburg contemporary, the mystic Wichmann of Arnstein, wrote in a letter:

God draws the soul upward in order to honor it through His grace and through union with Him—but the soul forces itself into the depths in order to hide from His grace. And because it cannot do this, it tries to convince itself through Him that it is unworthy of grace, and says: "Lord, you are the truth, and you cannot contradict yourself. You know I am not worthy of you; for your eyes have seen my imperfection, and my transgressions are not hidden from you." Then you [God] rejoice in its humility and pour upon it and into it all the great brightness of your most merciful countenance, and in the dungeon where it dwells the great light shines.⁶⁸

This was indeed Margaret's experience in her later years. But there was a dangerous side to this doctrine as well: it could lead to a humble but nevertheless pronounced form of self-aggrandizement. Mechthild warned of this and, not surprisingly, the Church authorities did as well. Evidently some priests found that Margaret had no sense of moderation because she refused all advice. And that was a sin.

Margaret's ideas therefore appear to have been known to Mechthild and shared by others. Margaret and John were evidently part of an intellectual community, a "community of discourse," which reflected on religious problems like these.⁶⁹ This provided them with challenging new ideas, and they responded with insights of their own. In this sense Margaret's critics were right when they sneered that she simply pulled

together scraps of information she had heard and presented the results as wisdom of her own finding. But she was not merely a consumer; whatever she heard or read she pondered during her meditations. This ruminating, *ruminare*, set associative thinking in motion and stimulated “insight” and “intuition.”⁷⁰ Images from the meditations recurred in dreams and visions. Margaret received illuminations, which she presented to John or to a learned visitor and thus arrived at new insights. She became a prophetess as defined by Hugh of St. Cher and Eve of St. Martin. When McGinn wrote his study of the theology of the abyss, he was not yet acquainted with Margaret. Now he would probably single her out as the most consistent and mature representative of that theology.⁷¹ Other aspects of Margaret’s thought also appear to have influenced theological developments of her time.

A second conclusion: physically handicapped as Margaret was and, according to the *Vita*, subject to terrible pain, we tend to read John’s sketch of her life as a factual description of Margaret’s actual suffering. We forget that he intended to use her as a living illustration of her lessons, and fail to take into account that he is making use of a literary device. Drawn directly into the story, we believe that these were Margaret’s actual feelings while forgetting the theological point. This happens despite John’s explicit statement occasioned by Margaret’s meditation on the verse “Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6: 10). He concludes: “The kingdom of heaven is filled with the riches of honor, love, and praise. The earthly realm on the other hand is full of misery, poverty, and despair, *pena et paupertas et abiectio*”—precisely the words he uses in the first chapter of the *Vita* to characterize Margaret’s life.⁷² These are therefore not unmediated scenes drawn directly from life but consciously composed exempla illustrating the Christian world-view; they are life and doctrine combined. And they should be analyzed and interpreted as such. Given this ambiguity, Margaret’s actual life may have been a good deal less “miserable” than the one depicted in her *Vita*—see her last years in St. Agnes. But for lack of historical sources nothing conclusive can be said on this matter. The same problem arises with other women authors like Hadewych (was she really exiled?) and those found in the German sister books (were their confessors really so meddling?).

Besides the theology of the abyss, Margaret’s ideas about Mary formed a second important component of her theology: Mary as the first maidservant of the Lord and Lame Margaret as her representative, servant of the Lord in Magdeburg.

MARIA DOCTRIN

Mary not only guided Margaret on her life's path, she also confided in her intimate, even unheard-of things about herself.⁷³ She told Margaret how she looked back on her own life and about her role in salvation history. Margaret came to understand that Mary was a *solitaria*, a sort of protoanchoress like herself. Living in seclusion, she had known at the age of seven that she was chosen to bear God's son. Although Mary, like Margaret, felt herself an abyss of humility and suffered from her own nothingness, she longed to become the maidservant, *ancilla*, of God. It was as if she said: "Lord, because You want to become a servant of men and serve them as a man, I want to share that suffering with You."⁷⁴ She became the servant of the Lord out of a desire to be a mediator, *mediatrix*, between God and humankind. She did this for the salvation of the whole human race. Ideas familiar from Anselm and his adepts, Guibert and Yvette, recur here. Mary told Margaret in passing that when Gabriel finally came to her, his annunciation was intended more for outsiders than for herself, since she had long known what was in store for her. And later her heart was not torn by the normal motherly anguish when she saw her Son suffer, although she did feel compassion.

It takes a good deal of intellectual effort to uncover what these two women are actually saying, because the gendered character of the language interferes with the message. With the masculine word for servant, *servus*, we immediately hear echoes of the high office of God's servant in the Church, the *servus servorum Dei*, sitting elevated and powerful on the papal throne. *Ancilla*, in contrast, calls up associations with the modest, passive virgin who accepted all that happened to her. But these are not the connotations that John and Margaret wish to evoke. They seem to use *servus* and *ancilla* as terms of equal standing for male and female servant; what interests them is the general notion of wanting to serve. Women could obviously enter the biblical service of the Lord just as well as priests in the Church. This is an extremely daring theological idea. And it throws a different light on the actual functioning of women in the living community of the faithful.⁷⁵

In broad lines Margaret's Mariology follows that of the apocryphal gospels and the thought of (Pseudo) Albertus Magnus.⁷⁶ Generally speaking, it also coincides with the ideas of other religious women, such as Hadewych. Margaret drew her own highly individual conclusions, however. Mary taught Margaret how she, too, could receive the body of the

Lord. Like Mary, Margaret was given the gift of discretion, *magna discretio*, and entered the service of humanity. Margaret thought to herself: "Lord, by becoming man You gave yourself to the whole earth, that is, to the body of the Holy Virgin; do that now with me as well, when you enter my body, and the earth, too. Come for the salvation of the whole world."⁷⁷ This was no small pretension. Margaret considered herself, like Mary, the vessel through which God's grace flowed to others. Theologically speaking, her deep abyss now proved extremely advantageous. For God's grace could flow like water to the lowest point and fill it up completely.⁷⁸

It thus happened that Margaret experienced an overshadowing by the Holy Spirit; she, too, became a servant who mediated between God and humankind.⁷⁹ Like the servant (male or female) in the New Testament parable (Matt. 25), she was given talents with which to work. God placed her in charge of his goods, *potestas super bona mea*.⁸⁰ This was the essence of her commission. It explains why service to her fellow believers was even more important to Margaret than her own contemplation or even her own longing for heavenly bliss.⁸¹ We can imagine the consternation evoked among clerics by all these pretensions, as well as the note of concern in McGinn's comment about "some of the most extreme formulations of the mystic as co-redemptor in the literature of the Middle Ages."⁸²

The idea of service formed the foundation of Margaret's activities in Magdeburg. With an appeal to incarnation theology, Margaret assumed the role of Mary and thus that of (maid)servant. This must have struck a sympathetic chord with the citizens of Magdeburg. The civic community had chosen their own independent patroness in the person of Mary as a way to set themselves off from the prince-bishop and the municipal government, for whom Mauritius and Roland served as patron saints. As an independent citizenry, distinct from the ecclesiastical community and the city government, it had given Mary its trust and placed her, in all her wisdom, on the seal of their community.⁸³ Now they heard that Margaret was Mary's representative on earth. They could therefore expect that this *ministra*, like the priests working for the Church but also independent of them, could mediate earthly and heavenly blessings for the community. Owing to her many years of study and the attention she gave to the citizens' thirst for knowledge, she was actually much better equipped to instruct her fellow citizens about the faith than were the priests—and the people could see the teachings graphically illustrated in her way of life. As a result, she was constantly surrounded by small groups of sympathizers. Margaret was truly the catechizer of the Magdeburg urban community

and the mediator of their salvation. The prophetic succession of Mary and her *servae* here takes its place beside the apostolic succession of Christ and his *servi*.

A Catechizer of the Lowlands

A RELIGION TEACHER OF THE MAGDEBURG CITIZENRY

To sum up, young Margaret grew up in the ecclesiastical heart of northern Germany, in a flourishing city with a clustering of political and Church elite. As a cultural and religious center, the town had a stimulating intellectual climate, which explains why Wichmann of Arnstein, a mystically inclined son of the upper nobility destined for a successful career in the Church, decided to stay here and join the new Dominican order. He even lured the noble and mystically gifted girl Mechthild to Magdeburg. Margaret felt attracted to this circle, as her desire to move to the St. Agnes convent in the Neustadt indicates.

While the mother of Guibert, who lived in northern France at the southern border of the lowland area at the beginning of the period researched here, had herself enclosed in an abbey in the countryside, Margaret, at the northeastern border one and a half centuries later, lived in a bustling commercial town. These two women mark the outer limits, temporal and spatial, of my research. Margaret shows us that the new spirituality in the southern Low Countries had penetrated into northern Germany, creating a cohesive cultural and religious region. Everywhere in this area people were inspired by the same ideals and read the same texts—Margaret's *Vita*, as we shall see, also left its mark in the sources that have survived from the heart of that area. A closer look at geographical factors shows that all of the anchoresses about whom we have more than a few superficial facts lived in important ecclesiastical centers. Such places offered opportunities not found elsewhere, and—at least as important—clerics lived there who took the trouble to record their lives.

Consumed by a desire for the religious life, Margaret hesitated between the convent and the anchorhold. Both forms of life were apparently open to a devout girl from the city. She knew that the anchorhold brought prestige but also that she was not cut out for the model ascetic life. Yet she opted for this alternative and had herself enclosed at age twelve. It appears that no long preparatory period was necessary, as it had been for Yvette.

Margaret did not choose the anchorhold out of a penchant for the contemplative life. That she considered a devilish temptation, one that had to be resisted. Her task lay in the community. She had to speak with visitors, even if she lay stiff with pain in her bed or found herself in rapt communion with the Lord. Her “employment” with God required total service to her fellow human beings. The references to the biblical parables of servants and stewards are a prominent feature of the *Vita*. Unabashedly these men are enlisted to enhance the story of Margaret’s service. We encounter no metaphors of bridal mysticism or of the languishing bride in the Song of Songs. Giving wide berth to a theology of the contemplative life, John anchored Margaret’s confession in a theology of service, artfully presented in chapters 59 and 60. Certain features of these passages would also apply to priestly service. What distinguished the new urban recluse from older forms of anchoritic and monastic life found pithy expression here.

Margaret most likely received her basic education at home. She could obviously read. John says nothing about any further education. She may have attended school—informally or otherwise—in the cathedral complex or received informal lessons from local clerics and visiting theologians. Once accepted into the circle of Dominicans, she probably had men like Jordanus of Saxony and Albertus Magnus calling at her window. In his younger years Albertus worked as a lector at Dominican schools in Germany. Margaret’s Mariology appears to have been inspired by his theology. She internalized what she heard of his ideas as mystical messages from Christ and his Mother, then used them as a basis for her own theology. Although Margaret did not, like Juliana, write a Latin liturgy by which we can measure her theological training, her mediation between the common faithful in Magdeburg and mendicants or reform-minded prelates was probably similar to that of Juliana and Eve in Liège. She did not limit herself to moral lessons, as we see Yvette doing in the account of Hugh of Floreffe.

Margaret seems to have quickly gathered a small group of people around her, a *hospitale*, according to her hagiographer. Robert I. Moore would probably label this a “textual community,” a circle of persons who were eager to learn what Margaret could teach them and who thus developed a “sense of belonging together” and a “group identity.”⁸⁴ John creates the impression that large numbers of people were involved but does not provide any concrete details. Only at the Agnes convent does he fill in the picture. There the anchoress taught and instructed believers; she knew their secret sins and prayed for them. She spoke with fire and conviction.

Her lessons were appealing because they contained more than superficial information and touched the hearts of her listeners.⁸⁵ Clerics were moved by them as well. Through her words and her mediation with God, they were personally touched by God's goodness and developed an intense inner life of faith. But there were also critics. When they came to Margaret with tricky questions, she naively answered them, not realizing that she was being tested. Suspicions of heterodoxy did not unduly upset her, however.

John covered up as much as possible the skepticism Margaret encountered, but evidently she did have to prove herself during her first twenty years in the anchorhold. People found it hard to accept that she had no mystical experiences like Mechthild. Margaret's request to Mechthild indicates that she herself doubted her calling as well. Nor did she have any pronounced gifts of prophecy. She had to make up for this lack through long years of solitary praise of God and eventually convinced those around her. She then also began to experience mystical visions. Once she had reached the age of the preaching Christ, her authority was uncontested. What the traditional clergy had previously declared suspect was now considered heavenly wisdom. The age caesura is somewhat lower here than in the case of the earlier anchoresses, but with its biblical underpinning is no less convincing.

Margaret performed no miracles and she could boast no extraordinary feats of asceticism. She taught the people no magical devotional practices, nor did she treat them to spectacular shows of angels and saints—God was willing to arrange such things for her, but she did not wish to base any claims on them. And she did not evoke the horror of those around her with terrifying battles with the devil, as Christina of Stommeln did. She actually did nothing at all spectacular. She simply touched the hearts of the people who came to listen to her.

John makes no point of the fact that this was a woman teaching religion. Once, at the beginning, he compares Margaret with the prophet Jeremiah, implying that she, like Jeremiah, had no choice but to proclaim God's word. The fire simply could not be contained. That she was a woman and Jeremiah a man, which in medieval eyes would no doubt have made him the equivalent of a priest, was apparently irrelevant. Misogyny was foreign to John. Even when he has Margaret meditating on the Fall, no unseemly word falls from his pen. The intriguing question for us is still why John and the citizens of Magdeburg accepted her, a woman, in this capacity. How did she come by her authority that seemed so taken for granted? She owed it, certainly, to the generally accepted prestige of the

anchorhold. But was her authority recognized by all the people of Magdeburg, including the traditional clergy (who did accuse her of heterodoxy but apparently had no objection to her activities as such)?

Margaret naturally did not celebrate mass. Nor did she preach in the strict sense of canon law, although she did have a hand in John's sermons. For the people of the Middle Ages, what distinguished a priest from an ordinary mortal was his reading of mass and his celebration of the Eucharist. As Richard Southern formulated it: "this sublime function . . . honoured [the priest] even above anything permitted to the angels, with power to create by their agency the God who is the Creator of all things and to offer Him to God the Father for the redemption and salvation of the whole world."⁸⁶ Here, in my opinion, we encounter the iron curtain that separated the prophetic layperson from the ordained priesthood. As long as laypersons respected that border, they could go their way. In a world in which the preaching of the gospel, the hearing of confession, and pastoral care still hardly belonged to the status-elevating qualities of the priesthood, respected anchoresses could assume such tasks without great problems. With an appeal to Mary and her role in salvation history, they could fulfill a function complementary to that of priests. Just as Mary took her place beside Christ on the heavenly throne, the mother anchoress resided beside the father priest in the local church building.

Even though Margaret did not claim the authority to administer the sacraments, she made herself as effective a mediator of salvation as a priest, with her claim that God's grace flowed to her fathomless depths and then was conducted by her to needy believers. Because the urban community clearly wished to distinguish itself socially and religiously from the episcopal church authorities, the citizens would have been happy to accept this. And Margaret's residence as an anchoress in the sacred space of the church building, which in itself made her an instance of salvation, would certainly have underscored her salvational power.

Margaret appears to have aimed her activities mainly at the growing group of religiously engaged citizens, the beguines and devout women around the Agnes convent and the merchants and tradesmen in the new town. With the exception of John, clerics and monastics appear at most in the margin of her life. The urban citizenry formed a growing religious force in the thirteenth century. The need to anchor their newly attained social status in cultural and religious expressions of their own made them an eager public for the anchoress. Having grown up with the age-old conventions of oral culture, they sought out compatible forms. And the

exempla and exhortations of the anchoress, her point-by-point lessons and lists, proved a perfect match for these needs. That the pioneering role was in this case played by a woman did not seem to worry them. They had also chosen Mary as their patron saint. Women had traditionally been pivotal figures in the transmission of oral culture and consequently in their own awakening in the area of religion and their view of the world. Men and women listened attentively to Margaret's lessons and discussed the wisdom she imparted. Together they experienced God's goodness thanks to her intercession and felt strengthened in their urban self-awareness and their Christian identity.

Eventually Margaret and John decided that they should record this self-shaped knowing for posterity. John wrote: "she desired that others would also attain the proper understanding, and she was sure that God would illuminate them with true knowledge, not only as long as she was alive but also after her death. And she was firmly convinced that the whole world would then be further comforted by these followers, since they would in turn instruct others, who would then also become greatly enlightened."⁸⁷ With considerable foresight, as if to remain in charge beyond the grave, John and Margaret set up a whole chain of people who would receive Margaret's lessons and pass them on to others. It was for them that they wrote what we now know as the *Vita Margaretae Contractae*.

The question remains whether their book actually had this effect. Were the lessons passed on from group to group and from generation to generation as they had envisioned? In the case of Yvette of Huy we had to conclude that Hugh of Floreffe's well-told story had little impact. No cult arose at Yvette's grave and not a single medieval manuscript of Hugh's text has come down to us. The *Life of Juliana of Cornillon* also found no readers outside Cornillon itself and Villers. And although Eve of St. Martin enjoyed local veneration as founder of the Feast of Corpus Christi, her writings never made it beyond a small circle of scholars. Were things no different with Margaret? My impression is that they were—and this will influence my assessment of other anchoresses. Evidence supporting this impression can be found in the manuscript tradition of John's work.

THE *VITA* AS A MEMORY PROMPT

Some fifteen copies or vernacular translations have come down to us of the *Life of Lame Margaret*—that in itself is sufficient proof of a carry-over

to future generations.⁸⁸ For a discriminating reader or listener from a later period, Margaret's Life contained two contradictory messages.⁸⁹ Some readers were probably struck by the touching sections about Margaret's humble life of prayer and praise, her feelings of nothingness and human insignificance, her intimate conversations with Christ, and her mystical raptures—this was the lowly anchoress speaking, who appealed to pious monastics and devout citizens. That the text was understood in this sense can be inferred from later “adaptations” of it, compilations that were tailored to better convey this humble message. The fifteenth-century manuscript from Cambrai that forms the basis of Schmidt's edition, for instance, contains only half of the original text. The active role of Mother Mary and the claims based on it were trimmed away, as were Margaret's bold visions and most of the tracts. The compilation takes the sting out of Margaret's activities. Also in the Middle Dutch version from Maaseik quoted above, Margaret is turned into a meek anchoress who does nothing but suffer inconsolably. The copyist of Cambrai and the translator of Maaseik showed great skill in preserving only those passages which, when strung together, make Margaret an extremely pious but thoroughly boring humble creature. All her claims are gone; all her lessons have disappeared. Only one remarkable element remains—her contacts with the outside world. Margaret is still the help and stay of visitors and passers-by.

But John's text contained a very different, almost contradictory message as well, a message that was picked up by other readers—and a second group of texts shows that this was indeed the case. The original *Vita* had also sections about Margaret's rebelliousness, her headstrong attitude toward her confessor and the critical clergy, and her intimacy with Mary, who had made her a powerful servant of the Lord in the town. To the ears of assertive men and women, not only in Margaret's own Magdeburg but also in urban centers elsewhere, this would have sounded like a confirmation of their own urban identity. It must have boosted their sense of self-worth and fostered their striving for autonomy and a civic spirituality of their own. And so it was understood, in my view. Alijt Bake, the outspoken reformer of fifteenth-century religious life and assertive author mentioned above, testifies to this in her autobiography. She tells how she was inspired by a few holy examples, among them Mary Magdalene, Mechthild (of Magdeburg), and Lame Margaret. These saintly women “seem to have left the contemplative life and entered the active life. And for this reason their life appears much less perfect on the outside, but it is much more perfect on the inside.”⁹⁰ It was precisely their activities outside

the enclosed world of the convent and the way they made their lessons and teachings public that inspired this woman in an age that was a good deal more restrictive than the thirteenth century.

This shows that in anchoress circles in Utrecht, where Bake received her training, and possibly in other groups of faithful of which we have no inkling, the memory of the self-willed anchoress lived on and challenged women to follow in her footsteps—in my Epilogue about Sister Bertke of Utrecht I will return to this. Complete texts of the *Vita* were, in fact, still circulating in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A new translation of the complete *Vita* was even made in the seventeenth century—notably in a Jesuit circle.⁹¹ While the Bollandists (also Jesuits) refused to include the Latin text in the *Acta Sanctorum*, others appear to have allowed spiritual daughters to read the complete Life. Here we see once again that much still needs to be written about the history of female devotion and the supposedly restrictive clergy.

There is no question, then, that outside Magdeburg and outside the cloisters where the manuscripts are preserved, Margaret remained a source of inspiration for men and women with a strong sense of their own calling. Her *Vita* and the lessons contained in it, like didactic texts in the vernacular, functioned as a memory prompt or even as a textbook for the new citizenry. But unlike vernacular texts, John's Latin *Vita* had canonical status; it was inserted into the venerable tradition of Latin hagiography and could command authority in itself. Margaret therefore functioned as a religion teacher for the townspeople not only of Magdeburg but also of Utrecht, Ghent, and even the entire lowland area between the Seine and the Elbe.

Living Saints

THE WORLD OF LIVED Christianity, the “religion vécue,” encompassed much more than what has come down to us in legal texts and institutional sources, much more than has been preserved in the documentary evidence. Christianity acquired its form in the living—that is, primarily oral—Christian community, the ensemble in which Church administrators and professionals worked together with the common faithful in the “true” community of the holy. It acquired form in the complex interplay of life and doctrine, of prescribed rules and prelived practice, of lived structure and structured life. It was in that larger world of the *Christianitas* that anchoresses operated.¹

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries women had lost their last foothold in the hierarchical system of the Church. While the mother of Guibert could still be ordained a vowess/deaconess and thus could anchor her actual leadership in the ecclesiastical structure, this path was closed to recluses of subsequent generations. After the Gregorian Reform the *sacerdotium* laid an exclusive claim to the mediation of salvation and reserved the office of teaching and preaching for the ordained priesthood. But in the larger community of lived *Christianitas* anchoresses exploited their gifts of grace and their religious leadership as never before. They occupied a place alongside the priests as prophets of the Christian community. Historians tend to brush this aside as “informal” and “marginal”; it simply could not be historically relevant because it was not part of “public”—that is, institutional—life. As charismatically inspired persons, recluses could at most attempt to influence the center from the margin. Such historians run the risk of trivializing their religious import and blunting their religious force. They forget that the center and public life did not lie in the structure but in the community, not in the institution but in the “public orality.” The independent “lay” force was as responsible for shaping the center as the ordained priesthood and the hierarchy. There, in the public

orality, it was decided what belonged to the universally accepted Catholic faith and who could lay a claim to accepted power and generally recognized authority. Not what the lawyers and theologians devised in their ivory tower had credence as such, but what was lived out, in an exemplary and inspiring way, in the Christian community. The papal ban on contraception is a good contemporary example from the ivory tower that has failed to gain credence. The Assumption of Mary, in contrast, is a prime example of a medieval doctrine lived out in the public orality and only later accepted as doctrine. The innovations in worship came first; the theological rationale lagged far behind.

In that living community, I conclude from the biographical studies, there was more leeway for equal and open interaction of all kinds of faithful than in the hierarchical system (of which we have the written relics)—certainly for women with a strong sense of their own identity.² In the established structures, the focus was primarily on the interests of the professionals, the *sacerdotium*, and the androcentric idiom of official theology; the issue was one of institutional power. In the larger community, the force of personal conviction and the credibility of the message carried the day; here it was a matter of persuasive or relational power. Learned women and open-minded clergy, common faithful and common theologians, entered the scene here on a more or less equal footing and discussed matters of faith and issues of morality and ethics. In the preceding chapters we have encountered the discussion partners to the extent that they appear in the Lives of my anchoresses: the Church reformers and abbots, the beguines and *mulieres religiosae*; the bishops of Liège, Hugh of Pierrepont and Robert of Thourotte; the learned bishop Guiard of Laon and the learned Dominican Thomas of Cantimpré; the Cistercian abbots of Villers, the Augustinian canons of Oignies, the Dominicans in Liège and Magdeburg. And, most important, the erudite theologians of Paris who turned away from the cold reasoning of the scholastics and sought support in the humane spirituality of the women: James of Vitry in the first generation, Hugh of St. Cher and Jacques Pantaleon in the second. It is this last group of men that would draw the obvious conclusions for the organization of the Church as a whole (see the Epilogue).

Away from the abstract thinking of scholasticism, the exchange revolved around personal spiritual experiences and a more affective theology. I imagine that the young participants (male and female) sat at the feet of the wise and old (female and male). Together they ruminated on

the texts of the old Church Fathers and the new mystics, and they recommended their own favorites to one another for reading. In this way, I imagine, Juliana and Eve began reading Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs and the venerable Augustine. Also the Song of Songs commentaries by Bernard, William of St. Thierry, and Rupert of Deutz will have come up for discussion, as well as the new ideas about Mary and William's *Golden Letter*. We know of exchanges of this sort in Oignies, where men and women lived together and where James of Vitry and Mary of Oignies inspired each other; of Lutgart of Tongeren and Thomas of Cantimpré; of Juliana and Eve, who discussed the Corpus Christi feast with Jacques Pantaléon and Guiard of Laon; and we can assume the same for other men and women in this milieu. The exchange sketched here went beyond the borders of convents and monastic orders, which have often acted as barriers in modern research. It even crossed the border between the sexes, a considerably more difficult barrier for scholars to overcome.

Incarnation theology, which portrays God as engaging directly with the faithful, took shape here. And it was set down in writing through the interaction between trained theologians and what I have called the common theologians, who were not educated at a university but were in many cases learned women (and occasionally unschooled men like Francis), who were the bridge builders between actual practice and learned theory. Common theologians enjoyed authority in the community of the faithful alongside academic theologians just as common law judges did alongside and in dialogue with the experts in Roman law.³ Recluses in the large ecclesiastical centers led the way. With both access to divine learning and time to study, these women gained insight into theological issues while at the same time remaining rooted in the religious community. They especially applied themselves to understanding the Trinity and the significance of the incarnation. They had no interest in speculative systems of thought—about such things as the hierarchies in heaven or the abstract doctrine of atonement. Of vital importance for them was insight into the coming of God on earth, Christ's incarnation in the Eucharist, and their own future in eternal life, as well as Mary's indispensable role in redemption and the part played by motherly, or earthly, nature.

Some of the recluses developed into common theologians of considerable stature. Themselves incarnations of salvation in the sacred space of the anchorhold, they were ideally suited to interpreting and providing a living example of the message of salvation. In addition, they gave instruction in the Bible and the faith to groups of fellow citizens who gathered

around them, forming little communities. Themselves illiterate, these citizens acquired a group identity from their teachers and, thanks to the “mediated literacy,” were forged into their own civic community of the faithful.⁴

They proved to be formidable competitors of the parish priests, who, after the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), were expected to ready their flock for eternal life through preaching and pastoral care. Because these women were convincingly pious and had no pretensions about celebrating mass or ministering the sacraments—the prerogative of the ordained priest, from which he derived his prestige—they could usually go their own way in the local community.

In view of what has been said here, the Christian community can be characterized as a complex network of relationships held in place by the guy ropes of canon law and common law, of structural power and personal charisma, of ecclesiastical status and popular weight. These ropes crossed in the sacred space of the church building, where the ordained priest displayed his ritual power, believers gave shape to their faith, and anchoresses mediated with God-Christ in heaven. The recluses sat like spiders in the middle of this web. In this last chapter I want to further define the place of these recluses outside the hierarchical structures but in the center of the Christian community. I will do this by investigating in context three themes that emerged in the biographical chapters. Together they should give sharper contours to the free anchoritic life. The three themes are: the place of medieval anchoritism in the general history of eremitism, its place in the oral culture of lived Christianity and in the Latin culture of the Church, and the leading role of Mary. I conclude with the profile of the anchoress as a living saint. Finally, in the Epilogue I offer a view ahead to the history of the phenomenon in the later Middle Ages.

Anchoresses and the Tradition of Eremitism

NO FORMAL STATUS

Medieval anchoresses saw in Mary Magdalene their foremother, and their hagiographers used the desert fathers as their model. Modern church historians deduce from this that classical and medieval eremitism belong in the same category. What has my research shown about the place of the urban anchoresses in the general phenomenon of eremitism?

Both medieval monasticism and the anchoritic life were offshoots of the eremitism of the desert fathers.⁵ Both go back to the virtuosi of the third and fourth centuries who freely and unconditionally dedicated themselves to the service of God. Anthony the Great (ca. 251–356), in the exemplary *Vita* by Bishop Athanasius, was the prototype for both.⁶ But in the course of the following centuries the two movements moved in opposite directions. The monastic life was immediately incorporated into the ecclesiastical structure. Monks and nuns acquired a status of their own in Church law, recognizable in their clothing and their way of life. Alongside the clerics, they received canonical status and enjoyed the *privilegium fori*, the exemption from secular law. Hermits and recluses did not receive any form of recognition and simply remained part of the laity. They were viewed as individual heroes of the faith, and, to quote the great specialist Doyère, “[on] ne légifère pas pour un cas isolé; on n’édicte pas de status de l’héroïsme.”⁷ The “religion vécue” was no concern of Church administrators and lawyers. Only when the behavior of hermits led to possible confusion with monks or priests—in other words, if they posed a threat to the legal position of the latter—did the Church promulgate rules about them in councils or in canon law. At the Council of Trullo (692), for example, it was decreed that hermits in black habits and with long hair, who looked like “real” monks, would no longer be allowed to show themselves in the cities.⁸

THE CONSTRUCT OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

The Church Fathers viewed eremitism from the monastic perspective. Monks were heroes of the faith who had jointly withdrawn from society and subjected themselves to a rule and an abbot. They had replaced the desert fathers’ mental rejection of the world with a physical avoidance. They lived in the isolation of an abbey, protected from the world outside by thick walls, at least in western Europe, where Benedict created a strict regime for his followers. In the monasteries monks devoted themselves to a life of self-sanctification and contemplation, “cette contemplation incessante et sublime,” according to Doyère, who besides being a canonist was also a Benedictine dom.⁹ From the perspective of the church leaders this was an orderly and manageable and thus beneficial institution.

Eremites were heroes of the faith, rough warriors of God who did not conform to this ideal. Choosing their own way of life, they subjected

themselves unconditionally to the will of God and followed his voice wherever it led them. They were loners who preferred to win their sanctification on their own. They took the difficult road, the *via aspera*, a choice with daunting implications. In the judgment of the Church Fathers it was an all but impossible feat to achieve contemplation on one's own strength in the midst of so many social temptations—achieve contemplation, indeed, for this was what the Fathers expected the eremites to be striving for, the *vita contemplativa*. It would therefore be best, the Fathers decided, for eremites to withdraw completely from society, deep into the desert as *anachoretæ* or high in the trees as dendrites. With a mix of admiration and horror they talked about the *subdivales*, who lived like hares in the field without any form of protection, or the *bosschoi*, the grass-eaters, who like grasshoppers hopped away as soon as they saw a living creature approaching (ecclesiastical busybodies at times tried to catch them with large butterfly nets).

As an alternative to Anthanasius's model of the hermit Anthony, who alternated long periods of solitude with preaching repentance in the city—for whom, in other words, solitary contemplation served social ends—the Church Father Jerome held up the example of “the first eremite,” Paul, very likely a product of his own imagination. According to Jerome, Paul had broken all ties with society and gone to live so far away in the desert that he had to be kept alive by ravens sent by God with his daily bread. He was the purest form of contemplative. No one knew of his existence until Anthony was sent to him by God. After he had told Anthony his story, his task was completed. He died, and Anthony buried him on the spot.¹⁰ As a prototype for female eremites, the legend of Mary Egyptiaca came into vogue. A prostitute converted by the Virgin Mary, she wandered in the desert for forty years, covered only by her long hair and miraculously fed by the three loaves of bread she had taken with her on her flight into the desert. She was found by Zosimas, who gave her communion, after which she died and was buried by a lion. The life of Mary Magdalene, whom we know as a companion of Jesus, acquired a new phase in which she lived in a mountain cave in southern France, devoting herself to pure contemplation. Every day she was transported briefly to heaven to receive heavenly food.¹¹ This was the true life of angels, the *vita angelica*. Pure contemplation and total seclusion from the world became the ideal. This construct of the Church Fathers invariably puts scholars on the wrong track when interpreting the phenomenon of medieval anchoritism.

Also misleading for scholars is the fact that Benedict incorporated this ideal of the Church Fathers into his monastic rule. Himself molded by the years he spent alone in the cave above Subiaco and remembering the attraction of solitude, Benedict opened the possibility for experienced monks who in a trial period of three years had proven their perseverance in the monastic community to retreat to the wilderness or have themselves enclosed in a *recluserium*. They then became a kind of superascetics, but remained monks according to canon law.¹² I have called them the “honors class” of monastics. In Carolingian times Grimlaicus wrote an adapted rule especially for them.¹³ This is therefore not a general rule for the anchoritic life, as is often claimed, but a rule specifically tailored for recluse monks. This, too, has made for misconceptions among researchers.

As a result of this patristic construction, a widespread assumption underlying scholarly studies of the medieval anchoritic life is that all anchorites were striving for pure contemplation and total avoidance of the world. They were striving, so the scholars hold, to completely disappear from society and to lose themselves in the contemplation of God. They would prepare (or be required to prepare) for this high level of asceticism in the monastery; a three-year trial period as a monk or nun was supposedly the prerequisite for entry into a hermitage or enclosure in an anchorhold. All hermits and anchoresses were assumed to have followed a rule as well. Sister Bertke, for example, the Netherlands’ most famous recluse, is supposed to have first lived in the Windesheim Jerusalem convent before having herself enclosed and to have followed the Windesheim rule. This is an erroneous assumption. Only the monks and nuns who strove for the “honors class” were bound to these rules. Free anchorites were not.

Finally, our perception is distorted by the opposition of Benedictines and hermits in modern times. After the classical eremitic ideal had found a niche in the Middle Ages in eremitical orders such as the Camaldolians and the Carthusians, it was only simple country folk, men from the lower strata of society, who in modern times still felt attracted to the hermitage. Their cells were no longer built in the forest but on the edge of a village or the estate of a landowner. Dressed in simple habits, these brothers made themselves useful as sacristans of pilgrimage chapels, schoolmasters, or pious gamekeepers. They were not intellectuals or men of learning such as the doms in the abbeys. “Homme[s] de petite fonction et de petite métier,” Doyère calls them.¹⁴ Just as urbane intellectuals view country people with a certain sentimentality but also with disdain, the Benedictines

looked down on the simple hermits and defined the phenomenon of eremitism accordingly. They projected the early modern practice back onto the classical and medieval periods and saw their own prejudice confirmed by the Church Fathers' ideal of the rough warriors of God. Because they wrote the handbooks and encyclopedias that we still consult today, they are largely responsible for the image we have inherited.

In modern times it was the exception that a well-educated man felt drawn to the anchoritic life—the Belgian priest Charles Grimmick (d. 1728) at the end of his life, for example, and Ignatius de Loyola (d. 1556) at the beginning of his career. The picture was very different for women, however, both in the Middle Ages and in modern times. Gifted and highly educated women who were not attracted to the cloistered convent did feel the pull of the anchoritic existence, as the lives of Jeanne de Cambry (d. 1639) and Maria Petijt (d. 1677) testify. Doyère was aware of this but consciously excluded women from his typology.¹⁵ This, too, has distorted our image.

ACTUAL PRACTICE IN CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL TIMES

Independent of these constructs shaped by normative law and the Church Fathers, individual men and women through the ages were in actual life drawn to the original ideal of the desert fathers. Early Christian eremites radically cut their ties with family and Church, but not necessarily with society as such. They opted for free submission to God but, as Peter Brown in his masterly study for late antiquity has shown, usually went no further away than the edge of the desert.¹⁶ Combining contemplation with pastoral care, they felt called to respond to the needs of the faithful around them. They functioned as personal counselors and as intermediaries between ordinary mortals and their masters, between human beings and God. They were mediators of grace, agents of heavenly bliss. Their social role was not a sideline that distracted them from their main task of contemplation and avoidance of the world; it was rather the “incarnation,” the concretization of their primary task. They were “holy men”: living in a patch of paradise on earth—with a tamed lion at their feet—they were instances of salvation.

Often they opted for a hermitage, and in some cases for a *reclusorium*—at a pilgrimage church, for example, or some other central spot. There they received visitors. In the time of the Crusades, many pilgrims

and crusaders from the West confessed their sins to anchorites in the walls of Jerusalem. The father of Thomas of Cantimpré was one of them, and it was to this that the son owed his calling.¹⁷

These actual lives of desert fathers acquired form in a genre of texts that differed from the formal hagiographies of the Church Fathers, the long *Vitae*, that is, devoted to a single person. Their history is recorded in the *Vitaspatrum* or short *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, as well as in the *Apophtechmata* or *Good Words of the Fathers*.¹⁸ Here the eremites were portrayed as men and women—there were indeed women among them¹⁹—in search of *hesuchia*, the complete rest of body and mind. They wanted to overcome their passions and for this reason fled the city; they sought to live the life of angels. Their goal, however, was not necessarily complete avoidance of the world for the sake of pure contemplation. For, along with peace of mind, we see from the *Apophtechmata*, they acquired the charismatic gifts of prophets and apostles. This gave them insight into the minds of their fellow human beings; power over the devil; the ability to raise the dead, predict the future, and reveal heavenly mysteries. In the stories about historical desert fathers and desert mothers, the fellow human being is never completely absent. In the judgment of Clément Lialine: “Le don de prophétie est le fondement de ce qu’on peut appeler l’apostolat charismatique de l’ermite.”²⁰ These eremites were addressed by the faithful as *abba*, spiritual father, or *amma*, spiritual mother. In them we recognize the forefathers and foremothers of our medieval anchorites.

These men and women opted for a life of free and complete submission to God, without a fixed rule and without an imposed obedience—and without a fixed place of residence as well, because they followed God’s voice wherever it led them. Freedom from all earthly ties and the pursuit of one’s own (or God’s) destiny was essential for their life. They were bees dancing in the sun, birds soaring through the air. As Brother Gheraert described Christina the Astonishing so poetically:

Where the Spirit of God is, there is freedom.
That is why she flew with great ease
With her body through the air,
Just as a bird that thought nothing of it.²¹

Beginning in late antiquity we also find examples of this free anchoritic ideal in the West. The most curious case is the hermit Wulfilaicus, whom

Gregory of Tours (ca. 600) met on his travels. This man had placed himself on a heathen pillar outside Trier—a strategic spot, because the citizens of Trier who still worshiped Diana secretly in the forest had to pass this pillar. He was, however, a thorn in the side of the bishops in the vicinity. They lured him down from his pillar and then quickly had it chopped down.²² As the research of Heuclin and others shows, dozens, even hundreds of men in the Merovingian and Carolingian age opted for forms of solitude and asceticism more suited to a northern climate.²³ In the eleventh and twelfth centuries there was even a veritable flood of hermits; among them were the hermit knights of France and the Low Countries, who evoked such enthusiasm in Guibert of Nogent.²⁴ Women, too, were gripped by this free ascetic ideal, although only in small numbers. While the large majority of men chose to live in a hermitage, women had no choice but to settle for a *recluserium*, usually adjacent to an abbey church. Unlike males they seem to have placed themselves in the tradition of the diaconate. The woman recluse Wiborada (d. 929), who was enclosed at the abbey of St. Gallen in present-day Switzerland, is an example of a deaconess recluse who played a significant role in her surroundings in the century before Guibert's mother.²⁵ She was a precursor of the new anchoritic ideal that would evolve in the cities. In an agrarian and monastic setting she experimented with ways of life that would come to full bloom in the urban society of the lowlands.

SISTERS OF THE HERMIT KNIGHTS

A surprising parallel can in fact be found between the thirteenth century "urban" anchoresses and the "rural" hermit knights of the previous century.²⁶ These knights, who were also laypersons and, like the knight Gerlach of Houthem (d. 1165), often converted to the anchoritic ideal later in life, made their hermitage a center of a lay apostolate. They were no more interested in total solitude and seclusion than the later anchoresses. They built their hermitage near a castle (Ailbert of Rolduc) or chose to live beside a main thoroughfare (Gerlach, also the hermit knights from Arthurian romance). From there they practiced their apostolic vocation among passers-by. Gerlach even provided his visitors with a meal from food raised on his own ground. And he cut off the luxuriant hair of earlier companions in order to bring them to repentance. As with the anchoresses, great pressure was exerted on these hermit knights to enter a

monastery, and both received support from high-ranking prelates. Gerlach, for example, had to endure the envy and anger of Benedictines in the area, who disparaged him to the bishop of Liège, persuading the prelate to chop down the tree in which the old man lived. Regretting his act later, the bishop became Gerlach's most loyal ally, even giving him a small chapel and a priest for daily masses. Thus the hermit's cell became a true apostolic center. These hermit knights also resembled the anchoresses in that they left disappointingly few traces in written documentation. As part of the oral rather than the institutional written culture, their activities were not recorded in the sources that have come down to us.²⁷

The old hermit knight and the new anchoress were devoted messengers of God. Although neither was authorized to preach or hear confession, living in the midst of fellow human beings they were easily induced to convey to them God's grace. The faithful knew this and came to them in large numbers. Of the hermit Aybert of Crespin in Flanders-Hainaut (d. 1140) we are told that his cell on an island in the Haine was at times so thronged with believers that it resembled a besieged fortress. The visitors wanted to confess their sins to him, and if they could not press through the crowd they would at times shout out their spiritual anguish *en plein public*.²⁸ Hagiographers of the thirteenth century are less generous with details of this kind about anchoresses, because they no longer fit the Gregorian ideal of the Church, but comparable anecdotes slip out between the lines of their accounts.

Neither the hermits nor the recluses allowed themselves to be boxed in by monastic structures and remained close to the Christian community. While not consciously anticlerical or antimonastic, they followed their own religious insights with independence and a sense of purpose. As self-assured citizens, they gave shape to their faith in the midst of the community. And they were concerned about the fate of their fellow believers. The common faithful appreciated this, unlike many who held office in the Church. They greatly admired these virtuosi and let them have privileges—in daily life or even in common law, including at times the *privilegium fori*.²⁹ Hermits and recluses may have remained outside the structures that we encounter in the written sources—and to which we erroneously ascribe general validity—but they did enjoy recognition and occasionally privileges in lived Christianity. As André Vauchez, the great specialist in the hagiography of western Europe notes, “La sainteté érémitique est probablement celle qui, au Moyen Âge, a recueilli le maximum d’adhésion spontanée de la part des fidèles.”³⁰

Public Orality

Medieval people functioned in the oral culture in which *imitatio morum*, learning by doing, was the most common form of education, not instruction in a school with teachers and a textbook. Professional training and official credentials were less important than the power of persuasion and an imposing example. This explains why charismatically gifted women could successfully compete with schooled clerics. Indispensable for every person, however, was a specific context in which to function.

Focused as we are on institutional structures, we tend to forget the extent to which noninstitutional life was structured by accepted role patterns and a generally recognizable setting. A person operating in such a setting enjoyed recognition and an “official” place in the community as much as someone with an institutional status.

As long as women operated in the context of the family and the clan, they had a voice in the traditional deliberations of friends and relatives. But as soon as they wanted to operate in the public orality of the town, they lacked an authoritative setting. Juliana of Cornillon experienced the negative consequences of this when she was dismissed as a *sompniatrix*, a dreamer. This explains why enclosure in a cell was such a gift from heaven, for it offered the person living there a generally recognizable, appreciated, and even elevated status. Apart from the anchorhold, the biographical chapters have indicated two other settings in which women could act with authority, namely the age of discretion in the context of the oral culture and the charisma of the prophetess in the context of the written tradition of the Church. For anchoresses these two settings reinforced the effect of their enclosure.

THE YEARS OF DISCRETION

In the world of common law and time-honored customs, women who had reached the age of discretion acquired more opportunities to act with authority in public oral culture than in the earlier stages of their life. In decrees of Church councils, in Justinian’s *Corpus iuris*, and in Germanic tribal law the age of forty had already marked an important caesura.³¹ This appears to have continued in medieval practice, although the milestone was never legally established and there was some competition with the biblical ages of thirty and thirty-three. Fortunately life-cycle tracts, which

were also written in the lowlands of northern Europe during my period of research, offer some insight.

Thomas of Cantimpré, the man who wrote exemplary *Vitae* of prominent *mulieres religiosae*—including the *Life of Christina the Astonishing*, which grew in the writing into the living proof of his own scholarly teachings³²—produced a learned life-cycle treatise of this kind, a work Jacob Maerlant would later translate into the vernacular. Thomas incorporated it into his book on human nature, the first part of his *De natura Rerum*.³³ In this handbook for preachers his aim was to sketch the physical and spiritual constitution of the human being, both man and woman. Even though he mainly uses the term *homo*, he means humankind as a whole and not only man (*vir*). Thomas distinguishes six phases in a person's life, the first of which is infancy, *infantia*. Thomas is astounded at the complete helplessness of human offspring when they enter the world. While young chicks can walk immediately and lambs can frolic in the meadow, babies are completely dependent for months on end. This must be a consequence of the Fall, he concludes. Interesting for our purposes is that social biologists and historical anthropologists consider this long period of dependence a significant factor contributing to the importance of grandmothers in the history of the human race.³⁴ The second phase, according to Thomas, is that of *puerita*, or childhood, after the infant has learned to talk; he places this phase between the ages of two and fifteen. Next comes young adulthood, *adolescentia*, from fifteen to thirty-five. This is the time for marriage and reproduction, the heyday of sensual pleasures. Most interesting for us is the fourth stage of life, that of mature adulthood, or *robur*, between thirty-five and fifty. Men and women are then completely grown up; they manage to restrain their libido ever more effectively, but easily get into arguments and fights because of one swash-buckler imitating and trying to outdo the other. It is apparently the phase of life suited for action in the larger community. We find similar ideas in other treatises. If they include illustrations, we often see men of a mature age depicted with bags of money and symbols of public dignity. Evidently women behaved according to these patterns just as men did, although in moderation. They were expected to act as wise old matrons in the community. The fifth and sixth phases were those of old age and decrepitude.

Surprisingly, scientific support for our findings can be found in studies by social biologists and historical anthropologists who have recently become intrigued with the fact that the human species is the only one in which females continue to live long past the menopause, in some cases

almost as long as before.³⁵ This seems to be at odds with every Darwinian theory. We would expect that females, like men, would die around the time that their powers of procreation were depleted. Research in the fields mentioned above is uncovering more and more evidence for the crucial role played by older human females in the development of the human race. Because homo sapiens could only lengthen its lead over other primates by allowing its infants long years of helplessness and dependence in which to develop their intellect, the mothers of the species, or the parent couple, were unable to feed and raise the young safely on their own, fully occupied as they were with seeking food. They needed the support of devoted fellow humans who were themselves no longer involved in procreation. Grandmothers were assigned this role. They protected the young, knew where to find roots or springs in times of food or water shortages, and raised the grandchildren to be socially useful and developed creatures. This last element is especially intriguing. I should like to submit the hypothesis here that in this social role of the grandmother we can see the biological background of the *nonna* (both grandmother and nun) and the wise old woman in older forms of society.³⁶ These theories can help us understand the social (and social-religious) functions of elderly women, including most of my anchoresses.

Women in this phase of life had passed the age of fertility. Having reached menopause, they were no longer sex objects for the men around them.³⁷ In the primitive world this equipped them for their new task, and in the Middle Ages it very likely made it easier for them to enter public life. We may wonder whether these women were viewed by their contemporaries as having totally shed their womanly status. Anthropologists point to societies that distinguish not two but three or four sexes.³⁸ Besides those of man and woman there can be a third of sexually immature children, and a fourth of older folk who are no longer sexually active. Was this perhaps true of the wise old woman, particularly if she was living safely behind the walls of an anchorhold?

The Written Tradition of the Church

TWO EYES OF LOVE

The wise old women we encounter in the setting of the medieval Church are primarily portrayed as prophetesses. To understand this, we have to

remember that a dominant feature of learning by imitation in oral culture was the seeing and knowing in images and visions. Prophetesses, women with mystical or visionary gifts, were actually doing within the Christian faith what was common in society at large, only in a more pronounced way.³⁹ Thanks to these visionaries, the visual perceiving became an authoritative form—or a recognizable setting—of acquiring and transmitting divine knowledge within the *Christianitas*. It was subsequently anchored in the theology of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. William of St. Thierry of the twelfth century developed the concept of the “Two Ways” or the “Two Eyes of Love,” a theology warmly received among the *mulieres religiosae*. In the thirteenth century, Hugh of St. Cher and the scholastics of his generation found it necessary to elaborate on this second way, which they called the way of prophecy, and to embed it in scholastic theology. Thomas Aquinas and the theologians of the late Middle Ages (Jean Gerson) built further on this foundation and even worked out a kind of protocol for testing putative women prophets.

In his *De natura et dignitate amoris* (On the Nature and Dignity of Love), William discussed the two ways of knowing, or, as he called them, “the two eyes of the love that want to see God.”⁴⁰ It is the core text for his view on the ascent to God. Because Hadewych used this passage in her eighteenth letter (ca. 1250), we know with certainty that the text found its way to the mystical women in the lowlands. To quote Hadewych:

The seeing that is naturally created in the soul is *caritate* [love]. That seeing has two eyes, namely *Minne* [Love] and reason. Reason cannot see God except in what God is not; *Minne* does not rest except in what He is. Reason has its free path, which it travels; *Minne* feels its weaknesses, but despite those weaknesses it progresses further than reason. Reason makes progress in those things that God is by means of those things that God is not. *Minne* sets aside those things that God is not and rejoices, despite her weakness, in those things that God is. Reason has more satisfaction than *Minne*. But *Minne* has greater sweetness of bliss than reason. Yet these two help one another a great deal: for reason instructs *Minne*, and *Minne* enlightens reason.⁴¹

There were, then, two ways to divine knowledge, the way of learning and reason (*scientia*) and the way of love (*sapientia*). *Scientia* was the territory of theologians and scholastics; their accumulated knowledge was stored in (Latin) books and transmitted to the *litterati* in the schools. *Ratio* was lord and master here, as well as an unbridled, almost aggressive thirst for knowledge. Guibert’s mother, Juliana, and Eve saw the dangers lurking there. A great disadvantage was also that scholars could never talk about

God in positive terms because he always eluded all knowledge accessible to humankind. At most they could say something about God in terms of what he was not. Juliana and Thomas Aquinas struggled with this when writing the *Corpus Christi* liturgy. The way of *Minne* was different. Even though the person traveling this path experienced many shortcomings and proceeded only haltingly, she covered much more ground. She could arrive at blissful insights. This happened during visions or mystical ecstasies. According to Eve and Juliana—and in keeping with the official traditions of the Church—these came about through the unction of the Holy Spirit. For Yvette and Lame Margaret it was more a matter of Mary initiating them into the mysteries of God—and this was in keeping with popular religious experience. Women in particular traveled the second path. Monastic theologians like Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry recognized that they also needed the second path to arrive at true knowledge. The men, ascending along the route of *scientia*, and the women, led upward on the path of *sapientia*, met at the high road where only *sapientia* went on, and perhaps at the mountaintop where they tasted the same mystical ecstasy. Women who traveled this path were known as prophetesses in the Middle Ages, and from the twelfth century onward were placed in the tradition of the prophets of the Old and New Testaments. Hildegard of Bingen led the way. The hagiographer of Juliana and Eve, and John the Dominican, author of the *Life of Lame Margaret*, presented their subjects in this light. These women, with their own place in the line of Miriam, Deborah, Hulda and Judith, or Jeremia in the case of Lame Margaret, could claim for their inspirations the authority—the setting—of prophetic proclamation.⁴² In lived Christianity they acted as prophetesses.

THE CHARISMA OF PROPHECY

Through the contacts that came about between *mulieres religiosae* and the theological avant-garde in Paris, Hugh of St. Cher, whose ideas were endorsed and augmented by Thomas Aquinas, felt compelled to think through the concept of the prophetic gift and insert it into scholastic theology. He blazed important new trails. From that time on it was generally accepted in Church doctrine that the gift of prophecy was not limited to the period of the Old Testament and early Christianity. Hugh defined prophecy as a charisma, one of the gifts of grace, of which Paul in Romans

12: 6–8 had written: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.”

In brief, the charisma of prophetesses belonged to the same category of gifts as the charisma of priests, teachers, and overseers (bishops).⁴³ It was a gift God granted to whom he wished and it was meant to be passed on to fellow believers; it had a didactic quality. Hugh understood prophecy not as an encoded message from God mechanically proclaimed through a human voice. Prophetesses were not telegraph lines through which a message was wired. They were chosen faithful who received images and visions, graphically encoded insights that had to be translated into words and proclamations (pro-phesies), a process that sometimes entailed years of study. Only after it had been phrased in words could the prophecy be proclaimed. It could happen that a pious woman saw celestial things while in a rapt state, like the nun in an exemplum of Caesarius of Heisterbach. In this case, however, the nun was not able to adequately capture the images in words, which meant she was not a prophetess.⁴⁴ On this point Hugh seems to distance himself from Old Testament forms of prophecy as exemplified in persons like Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar had no idea of what God was trying to tell him in his dreams. He needed Daniel, the prophet, to explain them to him (Dan. 5). Medieval visionaries did not need external interpreters; they were prophetesses themselves. In this they followed Paul in 1 Corinthians 14: 3–5, where he makes a distinction between people who speak in tongues and prophets: “but he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.”

For theologically educated women this was of prime importance. By formulating their ideas in terms of a prophecy they joined a recognized and respected theological discourse. Prophetesses were autonomous thinkers, whose insights were intended for the entire community of believers. And, to Hugh, they were themselves responsible for what they said. Their insights could not be dismissed as ecstatic ravings; prophetesses had to be taken seriously. On the negative side, this also exposed them to criticism. Church leaders could brush aside disagreeable ideas as contrary to orthodox doctrine. If we look at historical practice, however, it appears that the

urban faithful decided for themselves who would be granted credibility as a prophetess. Anchoresses who had proven themselves in their anchorhold were accepted immediately, no questions asked. They were true prophetesses, to whom the people listened gladly. This was hardly surprising, considering that they were living in a little piece of heaven on earth, and speaking with the voice of angels.

Meanwhile, it was generally accepted that prophecies could pertain to the present, the past, and the future. All that was hidden could be revealed in a vision. Leafing through the *Revelationes* of Birgitta of Sweden, for example, we notice that almost everything imaginable can be brought under this umbrella. There was no subject about which a prophetess could not speak. Everything off-limits to a woman because of her socially inferior status God could impart to her in a vision and, if he deemed it necessary, legitimize her with a personal order for prophetic proclamation.

Maria *Doctrrix*

More than the women prophets of the Old Testament, Mary, the arch-prophetess of the New Testament, functioned as the inspirational force behind my quintet. She demonstrated to Guibert's mother how she should deal with her rebellious son. She was the mentrix to whom Christ entrusted Yvette: "Mother, behold your daughter, I entrust her to you as your own daughter, as your own special servant, *ancilla*, forever: guard her and protect her and guide her, *guberna*, as your own child." And so it was with Lame Margaret. Mary taught her to read, instructed her in the basics of the Christian faith, and shared her own womanly secrets with her. Margaret saw in her a *solitaria*, a prototype of the anchoritic existence, and she saw herself as a second Mary. The motherhood of Mary radiated out to the mothers in the anchorhold, an assurance that they could feel legitimated by her.

Mary played an extremely *active* role in the life of our anchoresses.⁴⁵ She was a strong-willed and energetic mistress, directing the women and sending them out to perform tasks in the community of the faithful. Not the passive object of theological speculation and pious devotion, she was an active subject, a person who established an intimate relationship with the women in the anchorhold and guided their lives. Herself a personification of old ideas of eternal wisdom, she lived out, so to speak, the age of discretion and was the wise old mother incarnate.⁴⁶ This is a very

different role from the one usually ascribed to Mary in the devotional tracts and spiritual guides written by male clerics. Aelred of Rievaulx, for example, in his *De Institutione Inclusarum* (ca. 1160), gave his enclosed sister the following advice about her prayer life: “enter the room of blessed Mary and read with her the books which prophesy the virginal birth and the coming of Christ. . . . [G]reet your most sweet Lady together with the angel. Cry with a loud voice: ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women.’”⁴⁷ According to Aelred, Mary’s sweet waiting for the angel should encourage his sister to live quietly in her anchorhold instead of teaching children from the window of her cell or engaging in other unsettling behavior.

In common theology, then, Mary was a completely different person. She owed her position to her active consent to become the Mother of God and to her actual motherhood. After her overshadowing by the Holy Spirit, she, like the Spirit-inspired *mulieres religiosae*, had received divine knowledge and wisdom, which then remained at her disposal until the end of time—see Guibert of Nogent. She was the *Sedes Sapientiae*, presented in statuary and painting as the Mother with the prophetic gaze and with the incarnate Word on her lap.⁴⁸ Mary was the New Testament fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetesses. The prophecy of Joel cited by Peter in Acts 2 (see below) referred not only to the apostles but also specifically to her. No wonder that Rupert of Deutz would make her the head of apostles and prophets, as we shall see presently.

Mary had carried God under her heart, which meant that the divine and the human nature had come together in her. After Christ’s crucifixion she was assumed into heaven and reunited with Christ in his divine nature. This came to expression in her coronation as Queen of Heaven. Hugh of Floreffe devoted a long section to this matter in his *Vita* of Yvette. His interpretation implies that the divine nature of Mary and her rule of the heavenly and earthly kingdom radiated out onto Yvette, her earthly servant. As Queen of Heaven Mary was quite naturally endowed with a number of qualities that mortals appreciated in their earthly queens, especially their right to intervene with the ruler and beg forgiveness for their subjects (instead of insisting on vengeance and rigorous justice as kings did).⁴⁹ Yvette had experienced this personally when she knew herself guilty of a deadly sin but received forgiveness, thanks to the intervention of Mary. Also a mother and an earthly *mulier misericors*, Yvette was then placed in the service of Mary, the *Mater Misericordiae*. Like Margaret, too, saw Mary’s motherhood realized in herself. These new ideas apparently

needed exemplification. Caesarius of Heisterbach devoted an entire chapter to the subject, illustrating it with an exemplum.⁵⁰ A century earlier Rupert of Deutz (ca. 1075–1129) had already provided a theological foundation in his commentary on the Song of Songs.

MARY THE ARCHPROPHETESS

Born in the bishopric of Liège, the area of the *mulieres religiosae* and the anchoresses, and raised in the abbey of St. Lambert in Liège, Rupert had as great an aversion to the early scholasticism then coming into vogue as his contemporary from the same area, William of St. Thierry. He hammered out his own highly original affective theology in such works as his commentary on the Song of Songs, *In Canticum Cantorum de Incarnatione Domini* (1125).⁵¹ Rupert considered the Song of Songs a prophecy of the life of the Mother of God and her relationship with Christ, who was both her son and her lover. For him the “voices” of the two lovers were the voices of Mary and Christ. Rupert gave extra layers of meaning to their words by relating them to verses from the Gospels. The love songs are thus filled in with “historical” information from the life of Mary.⁵² And her life acquires a meaning that goes far beyond anything we have heard about up to this point. The verse “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth” (Song of Songs 1: 2) thus becomes a prefiguration of the annunciation and is augmented with the beginning of the gospel Christmas story. The verse “stir not up, nor awake my love, till she please” (2: 7) is linked to the period in which Mary “kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2: 51), before she had begun her active life in the world; this made her for Rupert the prototype of the contemplative life. But when the beloved knocks, calling, “Open to me, my sister, my love” (5: 2–8), Mary runs to the door and begins her active life of proclaiming the gospel. The watchmen pull off her cloak, which means that all the words she had kept to herself until then she now made public, preaching and writing the gospel.⁵³ Rupert views her as the true “author” of the gospel story, the informant of the gospel writers. Mary now preaches and directs her message, not only to the daughters and sisters of the Song of Songs, but also to the widows of the gospel and everyone who will listen. Desperate when her beloved has disappeared, she laments his death (crucifixion) but finds consolation in the institution of the Last Supper (5: 6, 310–16). Rupert recalls the words of Christ to Mary on the cross, “Woman,

behold thy son,” and to the disciple, “Behold thy mother.”⁵⁴ In his commentary on the gospel of John, Rupert adds at this point that Christ could have said this to each of his disciples; he therefore seems to view these words as a sort of ritual investiture of Mary as head of all the apostles. She was the archprophetess, *prophetissa magna*, and mistress of all prophets.⁵⁵ Because Mary at the time of her son’s death was at least in her late forties, she must have been perceived as a wise old matron in medieval times, a woman who could conceivably fulfill a function of this kind.

Dawning on Rupert here is that alongside the apostolic succession of priests in the Church hierarchy, the community of the faithful has something like a prophetic succession of prophetesses. Besides the *servi* (N.T. *douloi*), who were linked by a long chain to the pope, the *servus servorum Dei*, a female chain of *servae* (N.T. *doulai*) was linked to Mary, the ultimate *serva Domini* (or *ancilla Domini*, as the Vulgate has it).⁵⁶ Both successions, that of the male and of the female servants, go back to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, when, as the apostle Peter declared, the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled: “And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants [*douloi*] and on my handmaidens [*doulai*] I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. . . .”⁵⁷ It is also striking in this context that Rupert’s Mary appears to distinguish between two types of officeholders in the Church community: those who proclaim the Word by virtue of an ecclesiastical appointment (*catholicae gratiae*, such as ordained priests) and those who do so by virtue of a prophetic charisma (*propheticae gratiae*). The anchoresses could claim a place in the second category alongside the male priesthood.⁵⁸

Living Saints

In modern scholarship anchoresses are almost automatically studied in the context of hagiography and saints’ Lives. This is understandable in view of their life stories recorded in *Vitae* and published in the *Acta Sanctorum*, the collection of sources on Roman Catholic saints. But is it correct from a historical point of view? Were anchoresses saints? How did the medieval faithful “rank” them? What place were they assigned on the ladder of pious Christians that reached to heaven?

First of all, these women were not officially recognized, canonized saints in the medieval period, nor were they accorded—with the exception

of Eve—any kind of enduring veneration. Even the texts we have about them were not, with the exception of Juliana's, genuine saints' Lives. Since they did not follow the models established by papal procedures and did not aim at the canonization of their subjects, they cannot be considered hagiographic texts in the strict sense of the term. There are good reasons, then, to question their status. About Eve of St. Martin, for example, who was venerated locally and buried in a stately tomb, there is no text at all, and we know the mother of Guibert only through the autobiography of her son. Hugh of Floreffe's work on Yvette was more a pious biography than a genuine saint's Life, even though he certainly knew how to write such a *Vita* properly, for he had at his fingertips James of Vitry's model *Life of Mary of Oignies*. The *Life of Lame Margaret*, by John the Dominican, fell so far out of the mold that the Bollandists intentionally excluded it from the *Acta Sanctorum*. Only the life story of Juliana of Cornillon was expertly shaped by her hagiographer into a *Vita*. The author devoted considerable thought to the matter and justified his approach in a prologue. He modeled Juliana into a virgin martyr, the most popular female model among Church leaders of the time.⁵⁹ He inserted a long death-bed scene, in which the saint-to-be predicted exactly the day on which she would die, just as the rules of the genre prescribed. Hugh, incidentally, had Yvette do the same. In the cases of Lame Margaret there is no mention whatsoever of her death, not even of the date. Juliana's hagiographer tried hard to praise the thaumaturgic qualities of his subject, even though he had nothing noteworthy to report about a developing cult. In the cases of Yvette and Lame Margaret there is not so much as an attempt in this direction. In conclusion, we can say that the authors, with the exception of Juliana's hagiographer, were apparently not striving for the canonization of their holy women.

The absence of any substantial cult applied not only to Juliana but to the other anchoresses as well—and, for that matter, to virtually all the *mulieres religiosae* from the lowlands. Even the impeccably saintly women Mary of Oignies and Lutgart of Tongeren, about whom model *Vitae* had been written by the Church reformers James of Vitry and Thomas of Cantimpré, did not after their death develop any cult worthy of the name. James and Thomas did everything in their power to encourage one, wearing finger bones of the venerated women as relics around their necks and propagating their sanctity wherever they could. James even sent money and gold from Rome to have costly altar plates made for the liturgical celebration, but to no avail.⁶⁰ Yet a local veneration, according to the expert

on medieval sainthood André Vauchez, is the minimum requirement if we want to speak of a "saint" in the ecclesiastical sense of the word.⁶¹ He is referring here—and this is important—to the requirements used in papal canonization procedures. He notes with surprise that no saints sprang up in the lowlands and that no requests were ever submitted for canonization of *mulieres religiosae* of the Low Countries. The picture for southern Europe is quite different. There the veneration of devout women often began during their lifetime and continued after their death. Mendicant monks or city clergy campaigned successfully for their canonization.⁶² What was the problem with the women in the north?

The problem was not so much with the women as with the scholars, who automatically projected modern conceptions of sanctity, dating from the time of the Counter Reformation, back onto the Middle Ages. As Vauchez has shown in his magisterial book, canonization procedures and the theological reflections about sanctity and the holy were still in the making in the Middle Ages. They crystallized into a clear concept in the time after Trent; in other words, well after the end of the Middle Ages. It was only in the eighteenth century that the legislator-pope Benedict XIV made it part of canon law—the same pope who gave considerable attention to the anchoritic life, wishing to give it a place in canon law. From that time on a saint was a person long dead who lived in the company around God's throne and made this known by working miracles. He had won this privileged position because he had excelled in his earthly life, proving himself a hero in the seven cardinal and theological virtues. Life and miracles were supposed to be recorded in a saint's Life governed by strict criteria.⁶³

In the Middle Ages, before the canonical concept of sanctity had crystallized, other concepts of sanctity and the holy applied as well. They were equally orthodox and had a similar appeal to the pious but did not aim at ecclesiastical canonization.⁶⁴ Here again we see common theology at work and the immediacy of the faithful to God. The idea of living sainthood in particular seems to have had a great attraction. Not the dead saint, whose miraculous life story evoked deep amazement, but the living person, who spoke to the faithful. Not the (absent) saint in heaven who interceded with God, but the living man or woman who communicated with the people. This concept of living saintliness would eventually become a constitutive element of Church dogma, but in the medieval canonization procedures it was still drowned out by the emphasis on the miraculous and the hereafter. It therefore led neither to canonical *Vitae* nor

to requests for ecclesiastical canonization. The devout women in the lowlands are a case in point.

What impressed the contemporaries of the *mulieres religiosae* was, quite simply, their holy presence. People who went to see Yvette in the leprosarium found it difficult to leave again. One of Lutgart of Tongeren's visitors was asked: "Did you see that *holy woman*?" He replied: "I saw and in the way she looked at me, I was so struck through and through with such a horror of sins that it was as if it had been *the Divine Majesty looking at me*."⁶⁵ For contemporaries, sanctity acquired flesh and blood, became visible and tangible in the pious women. These were their "living saints."⁶⁶ For them saintliness was incarnated sanctity. This was what characterized these holy women, and their hagiographers wanted to make that clear in their texts.

For those among them who were anchoresses an extra quality applied as well. With their preference for the visible and the tangible, the faithful could see in these recluses living on holy ground visible and tangible actualizations of salvation. For them heaven and earth met in the sacred space of the church building and on the sacred spot of the anchorhold. Such places, as Eamon Duffy has put it so graphically, were "power stations where the holy could be tapped."⁶⁷ Believers came to these spots to perform their devotions and enjoy a small taste of heaven. The sacred quality radiated out onto the occupant and made her a minister of that salvation. Anchoresses were therefore able to convey God's grace to the people who knelt at their windows. They were not only holy examples but also mediators of salvation—not after their death in heaven but right here on earth. To pursue the metaphor, salvation flowed to earth at the place where heaven and earth touched and was passed on to the faithful by the anchoress. They were the ministers of the sacred spot. In the case of Lame Margaret this is expressed in highly graphic terms.

This is what the authors of the anchoresses' life stories tried to retain. Although Juliana's hagiographer is writing about a woman who has already died, he describes her example in a way that he hopes will call her back to life. He places her back in the circle of holy men and women, *sancti*, who are still alive and whose examples of virtuous living can be imitated by the faithful, both men and women. They are "contemporary examples, *exempla*, of saints, whose motivating power is greater the more recent they are." *Exemplum* is a word that keeps recurring in the texts.⁶⁸

These are intriguing words. Here we again see the "religion vécue" shimmering through the text. As in the case of the eremitic ideal or the

quality of the visionary knowing, we observe here the interaction between lived religion and written tradition. The authors seem to be working more in the tradition of the *Vitaspatrum* and the “holy men” of late antiquity than that of the formal saints’ Lives of the Church Fathers. This testifies to an essentially different concept of the holy—not dead but alive, not thaumaturgic but exemplary. And it demonstrates an essentially different function of the text—not an ecclesiastical *Vita* but a living exemplum. An exemplum, indeed, but then in the sense of Aaron Gurevich’s definition, a salvational story that “happens” at the very moment it is being told.⁶⁹ It is a concept and a function that belongs in the oral culture of lived *Christianitas* and not in the written procedures of the Church. It fits into the tradition of the living desert mothers rather than the constructs of the Church Fathers. It is common theology incarnate.

PROFILE OF THE ANCHORESS

From the constituent elements described above we can compose a “character sketch” and a “profile” of the ideal anchoress—a profile that must have been present in the minds of the faithful, perhaps only half consciously, when they heard the voice of their own anchoress and sought her out for help with their problems. Of course, a good many anchoresses never actually lived up to this ideal. Like any good profile, it makes impossible demands. But it does indicate the scope of what historical anchoresses pursued and of what the faithful hoped to receive from them.

In her character, then, the potential recluse had to meet the following requirements. She had to be a free and independent spirit. She had to be extremely strong-willed, but balanced and even-tempered. She had to love study and meditation, but at the same time possess gifts of communication. She preferably had relevant life experience, as mistress of the house and as a mother, for example. She was a minimum of thirty, preferably forty years old.

The profile might have been written up as follows. Through strict ascetic practices and a life of exemplary virtue, the anchoress has struggled free from the limitations of human existence. She possesses true calm, which means she can hear God’s voice without impediments. She experiences mystical ecstasies, during which she is admitted into heaven. She then sees what others know only from hearing, and knows with an infallibility characteristic of God himself. She witnesses that God (Christ)

stands as judge over the quick and the dead in her own surroundings. Back on earth, she informs those concerned of God's decrees. She lets it be known who is elect and who will come to a bad end.

She walks the path of *sapientia*, acquiring en route a knowledge of the Bible and theology that equals or surpasses that of professionals. As a prophetess she is charged to proclaim the word of God to the community. When necessary she criticizes the local clergy.

She enters the service of Mary, the archprophetess and Queen of Heaven and Earth. As Mary's servant, she carries out the orders of her mistress. Her task lies here on earth during this life, not in heaven after her death. At the same time, however, she has left earthly existence behind by having herself enclosed. She is both dead to the world and alive for people around her.

She lives the life of angels. Residing on a piece of holy ground, she brings salvation into the here and now, making it visible and tangible—graspable, in the full sense of the word—for the faithful. She imparts the grace of God to whom it is due.

She is a living saint.

Epilogue

HERMITS AND ANCHORITES had for centuries functioned in the oral world of lived *Christianitas*. They were not part of the institutional structure of the Church and had no status in Church law. Their life was not governed by (ecclesiastical) laws and regulations. But with the advancing bureaucratization of the Church and the reforming zeal of some of its leaders in the thirteenth century it became clear that they could not escape some form of institutionalization. First steps were taken in this direction around the middle of the thirteenth century. We can identify Pope Innocent IV (d. 1254) and his prelates Hugh of St. Cher and Jacques Pantaleon in particular as dedicating themselves to this cause. As committed advocates of an affective spirituality and supporters of the spiritual ideals of religious women, the Eucharist devotion, and the Corpus Christi feast, they saw it as their task to create space for these women within the Church they were reforming. The crucial question for us is whether they would permit the free recluses, portrayed in this book as having a character and domain all their own, to retain what they had achieved or if the women would again lose all capability for action. Did their bold leap toward heaven also end up behind the walls of a cloister? Studies on the restrictive, even misogynist character of the late medieval Church suggest the worst; but rightly so? I wish to argue that despite all regulation and claustration, anchoresses at the basic level of social interaction managed to preserve essential elements of the free reclusive ideal. A rough sketch of developments in later ages will illustrate this point. And Sister Bertke (d. 1514), the most famous of all lowland anchoresses, will present herself as a test case. In a later study I hope to go into the points raised here in greater detail.

As described in previous chapters, Jacques Pantaleon, archdeacon in Liège and for a time vicar general of the bishopric under the reform-minded Bishop Robert of Thourotte, was assigned important tasks in the diocese.

In 1245 he accompanied his bishop to the Council of Lyon, where his friend Hugh of St. Cher, by this time a cardinal, played a prominent role. At this council the prelates pleaded for a much more active policy toward religious women. These women, it was argued, should enjoy the protection of the Church but should also be brought under a rule and the authority of priests. After the council Innocent IV, supported by Hugh of St. Cher, set about implementing the decisions taken and composed briefs and bulls spurring church prelates and leaders of the monastic orders to action. He placed the devout virgins under his papal protection.¹ We see here the continuation of the policy initiated by Gregory IX with his bull *Gloriam virginalem* of 1233—and a precursor of the coercive rules of Boniface VIII in his bull *Pericoloso*.

Thus legitimated by the pope, Jacques Pantaleon wrote a *Libellus de Regula et Vita Beginarum* for use in the bishopric of Liège. All free-roaming religious women had to be brought under some kind of *forma vitae* and enter some form of communal life. Recluses were no exception. Those who entered a convent and/or placed themselves under a mistress were given protection by the bishop.² During his papacy Pantaleon would continue this policy by sending out letters of protection to beguines and recluses in Liège in 1262.³ As we shall see, the policies introduced here would have a lasting impact on the reclusive life in Liège and the Low Countries.

With the coming of Henry of Guelders (1246–76), the only bishop of Liège ever to be deposed for his deplorable rule, there was no longer any room for reformers like Pantaleon. Elsewhere, however, the issue of religious women was actively addressed. Archbishop Conrad of Hochstaden—who, as I argued, supported Juliana and the Corpus Christi feast—now took under his protection women consecrated to God “who lived in poverty and chastity” (1246).⁴ Hugh of St. Cher, sent in 1251 as cardinal-legate to the German Lands including the Low Countries, initiated a whole series of concrete actions from Cologne, where he took up residence. He conferred about them with Jacques Pantaleon, whom he met in Cologne in 1251 and, “bien étonné de se trouver ensemble,” possibly with Thomas Aquinas as well, who was teaching in Cologne during those years.⁵ We are already familiar with some of Hugh’s actions. It was in that same year that he came to Liège to celebrate in full apostolic regalia the Corpus Christi mass in Eve’s church, St. Martin. The following year he introduced the feast into the entire area under his jurisdiction. He granted

important indulgences to St. Martin and gave the abbey of Salzinnes, where Juliana was living, his protection; and when Salzinnes found itself in deep trouble in 1256, Pope Alexander IV even placed the abbey directly under his papal protection.⁶ He also supported the construction of the new beguinage in Aarschot.⁷

Hugh took more general measures as well in order to guarantee religious women the freedom to fully consecrate their lives to God. In a bull for Cologne he decreed that devout women who lived outside the protective walls of a cloister and were not subject to a rule needed extra care. Such women were adrift on the stormy waves of the sea, as it were, lashed by the perils and temptations of this world. It was for this reason that he gave protection to the beguines of the city and the entire bishopric and granted immunity to them and their houses. He found a way, in other words, to bind them to the institution of the Church. At the same time he required that disobedient beguines be forced into obedience.⁸ The dominant tone of this bull is extremely supportive: Hugh expresses admiration for the beguines' strength of mind and wants to protect them from trouble. But there is an unmistakable critical undertone. Well-behaved girls should not be wandering about on their own; Church administrators should see to it that they safely concentrate on their heavenly bridegroom behind closed doors. Qualified priests should take them under their wing.

Hugh continued to pursue this policy in later years, after his time as legate. He prompted the pope to take action against the male orders, that ignored their religious sisters. The stubborn refusal of the Cistercians and Premonstratensians as well as the Franciscans and (his own) Dominicans to take responsibility for religious women could no longer be tolerated. These women deserved their serious spiritual care. Unaffiliated women's convents had to be admitted to the orders, and ordained monks had to assume responsibility for their spiritual guidance. He in fact personally saw to it that this measure was implemented in his own order at the general chapter of Florence (1257).⁹

In brief, both Jacques Pantaleon and Hugh of St. Cher fully recognized the desire of women to lead a religious life. They felt great admiration for the way the women channeled their spirituality into new territory, including eucharist devotion and a campaign for a new feast, and believed they should be given free rein to further develop such initiatives. But that would have to take place in structures compatible with the tradition of the Church. That meant living in closed convents, preferably without contact with the outside world; and these women should certainly

not be allowed to assume religious responsibilities in society. Indeed, as far as these prelates were concerned, the bold leap toward heaven should end behind the walls of a cloister.

In a way similar to the regularization and institutionalization of the beguines, church leaders wanted to institutionalize the life of recluses. Recluses had to be enclosed, once and for all; they had to follow a *forma vitae*, and thus make some form of profession and take vows. Renier of Tongeren in the bishopric of Liège, the archbishop in the diocese of Cologne, and possibly others whom we do not know, were urged to bring this about. No thirteenth-century texts with such rules and profession formulas have come down to us from my research area, but we do have some from the late Middle Ages. Descriptions of enclosure rituals also date from that time.¹⁰ Sister Bertke from Utrecht had to take vows of this kind. She was enclosed for life and followed a rule for anchoresses. This was not a rule in the monastic sense but a very short and highly practical document containing nonbinding advice. In their conciseness and soberness such rules show no resemblance whatsoever to the detailed manuals of the English *Ancrene Wisses*. Geert Grote, for example, wrote a letter with recommendations for an anchoress in his surroundings but noted at the same time, quoting Bernard of Clairvaux, “that he did not command her, nor was he entitled to command her, but that he rather gave her good advice.”¹¹ And a ritual enclosure still did not give access to the clerical order or to monastic status.

Oddly enough, there was a rule for recluses, known as the *Ordinances and regulations of St. Gregory (Ordinantien ende puncten [van] Sinte Gregorius)*, circulating in the bishopric of Liège in the late Middle Ages. It is a concise list of about twenty points written in the vernacular and with a strong emphasis on the clausura.¹² I can think of no Gregory more likely responsible for this text than Gregory IX. His *forma vitae* for the *Sorores Inclusae* (Poor Clares), his bull *Gloriam virginalem*, and his campaign for strict clausura make him a plausible author. His recommendations must have been brought to the north by Jacques Pantaleon, Hugh of St. Cher, or possibly Guiard of Laon. In any case, it reflects the ideals of this circle of reformers. Not only nuns but anchoresses as well were supposed to subject themselves to rules; they had to request permission from the bishop for enclosure and take a vow for life. They were required to live in total seclusion, separated from the world outside by a black curtain at their window. Once a week they were allowed to hold “office hours,” at a time set by the priest, in order to control the crowd of believers.¹³ The

implication here is that they were supposed to devote their entire life to penitence and prayer, not to pastoral work or to teaching their fellow citizens.

Did the Church succeed, then, in imposing the model of the “honors class” of monastics on free recluses? And did the Council of Vienne (1311–12) and what it brought in its wake actually frustrate all ambitions of women to exercise religious leadership in the Church? The answer to these questions is twofold. On the matter of institutionalization and subordination to diocesan authority the answer is quite simply yes. The requests made to the bishop of Utrecht, Frederick of Blankenheim, for permission to be enclosed and the record of Sister Bertke’s life make this quite clear. They also show, we might add, how popular the phenomenon still was despite the restrictions. The Formula Book of Bishop Frederick, one of the very few sources of the medieval bishopric of Utrecht that survived the Revolt, contains a number of standard letters sent by the diocesan chancery, including sixteen to anchoresses.¹⁴ Since Frederick was bishop from 1396 to 1423, the letters must date from that period, but we unfortunately do not know if they were spread over his entire term of office or only a few years; nor do we know how many copies were made of them. Whatever the case, sixteen letters means that at least one or two were sent every two years. Extrapolating from that minimum to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, we arrive at a minimum of 120, but there were most likely many more enclosures. Thirteen of the anchorholds were already occupied, and three new ones had to be built. Ignoring the fact that only some recluses sought official permission, I still arrive at well over 100 occupied anchorholds in the late Middle Ages. And that figure is only for the bishopric of Utrecht, at the periphery of the Low Countries. In the late Middle Ages every small town must still have had its anchoress while large ecclesiastical centers had several. Fifteenth-century Utrecht had at least five occupied anchorholds.¹⁵

The second question, namely whether the Church succeeded in pushing recluses completely out of public life, stowing them away, as it were, behind the walls of their anchorholds, is less easy to answer. Life-long enclosure and the observance of a *forma vitae* do not in themselves necessarily exclude pastoral or teaching activities. Even Lame Margaret in her stripped-down Middle Dutch Life from the fifteenth century was allowed to continue in her pastoral role. Late medieval anchoresses also

lived in the heart of the community; they remained ambitious women, often with an excellent education and an aristocratic background. The case of Sister Bertke offers further support for cautious doubt.

Bertke of Utrecht (1427–1514)

Illegitimate daughter of Jacob of Lichtenberg, provost of St. Peter's and for a few years even suffragan of the bishopric, Bertke belonged to the powerful Lichtenberg family of Utrecht.¹⁶ At the age of thirty she had an anchorhold built from her own money at the Buur Church. Viewed from the ecclesiastical power center around the cathedral where she very likely grew up, the Buur Church was on the other side of the Oude Gracht (Old Canal) in the bustling commercial quarter. It was the parish church where townspeople (*buren*) came together and where the municipal government announced its ordinances. Bertke, in other words, sought out the heart of the civil community.

There in the busy town center she was enclosed for fifty-seven years. Her name was preserved for posterity because the prior of the Regulars' convent who kept the key to her anchorhold—and was therefore most likely her confessor—saw to it that in the *Legenda Aurea* incunabulum of his convent an entry was made of the death, at age eighty-seven, of “the devout virgin Berta Jacobsdaughter. . . . And she was a professed sister according to the rule that all those who are enclosed in solitude and in anchorholds are required to observe. Which rule she accepted and was enclosed by the reverend father in Christ Joest, bishop of Jheropolis, suffragan in Utrecht.”¹⁷ But she is known above all for the songs and tracts found in her anchorhold after her death. Published in 1516 by the printer Jan Berntz, they were subsequently disseminated in various reprints. Some of the songs from this collection are still part of the standard canon of Dutch poetry; her Christmas vision is another of her works that is still well known.

These facts led researchers to consider Bertke an isolated penitent, unknown and unloved, who escaped oblivion only after her death owing to the incidental discovery of her writings. A secluded life of this kind fit well into the modern image of the devout woman. Only in recent years have some surprising archival discoveries (about her family background, for example) and the study of devotional manuscripts from the late Middle

Ages made it clear that Bertke must have been an influential person during her lifetime.¹⁸ Her songs were already being sung outside the anchorhold and recorded in songbooks, and her devotional and mystical texts probably circulated as well. Her tracts show that she guided visitors for whom she promised to pray.¹⁹ In the oral culture of medieval *Christianitas* she must have played a role that we completely overlooked, focused as we were on one-sided written source material. This is also evident from the accounts book of the Buur church for the year 1514. Following Bertke's death and burial in her anchorhold, six guards had to be hired to control the throng of faithful who wished to pay her their last respects—so devoted were the parishioners to the anchoress. In terms of everyday practice in medieval Utrecht, then, she must have been a highly visible and charismatic personality. She was not the unknown, introverted recluse that later generations thought her to be but a generally loved woman and inspiring source of strength for the townsfolk among whom she lived. By choosing her residence at the Buur Church, the “town hall” of Utrecht, she had publicly announced that she had a message for the local community. And we can assume that she lived up to this claim in the years that followed. Despite the restrictive policy of the Church authorities, the townspeople were still—just as were the faithful in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—independent enough to decide for themselves that they would listen to this recluse. And the clergy evidently was not yet strong enough to impose its will.²⁰

Bertke did have a great deal to say to the community. Her songs indicate that she, like her predecessors, had freed herself from the limitations of human existence through strict asceticism and the exemplary exercise of virtue—the first requirement in my profile sketch for a recluse. We sense in her tracts the true peace of mind that enabled her to hear the voice of God—a quality also evident, no doubt, in her talks with visitors. Although we know nothing of Bertke's education or religious formation, the voice we hear in her texts is that of a highly cultivated woman, extremely well informed about the theology and mysticism of her time. We can surmise that she had access to the library of the Jerusalem convent, whose prior, as we know, kept the key to her anchorhold. Today this is still a rich collection of manuscripts and incunabula, and the basis of the Utrecht University library.

She also experienced mystical ecstasies. In her Christmas vision she describes how Mary, when she knew that her hour had come, was transported

to heaven by angels. Mary felt the “sweet pullings and yearnings” of her loving soul for the Lord (words reminiscent of the mystical ecstasies of Hadewych and Ruusbroec). Swept up to ever-higher spheres by angels, she “knew” the Lord and bore his Son. The angels took the infant King into their arms and carried him to earth. Mary, too, they carried back to the stable in Bethlehem. There the child was presented to her. The soft noises he made brought Mary back to her senses, and she began caring for him. It is a touching and highly original vision that reads like an evocative image of Mary’s ecstatic bearing of the Living Word, but at the same time like a metaphor of Bertke’s own ecstasies and the birth of God in her heart. Like the recluses from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Bertke had a special relationship with Mary. She followed in her footsteps, and in her own ecstasies and in the lines that she composed she felt herself an earthly servant of the heavenly Queen who gave birth to the Living Word.

She lived the life of angels. Residing on a patch of holy ground, she brought salvation into the here and now, making it visible and tangible for the faithful—graspable in the full sense of the word. Clear testimony to this are the long lines of townspeople who came to pay their last respects to her after her burial in the holy ground of her anchorhold.

She was a living saint. The notes about her life written by her confessor into the *Legenda Aurea* incunabulum in his library can hardly be interpreted in any other way. Her work was here on earth, in Utrecht, and not in heaven after her death. She saw it as her God-given task to interpret his Word for her fellow believers. Her written words, recorded in the little book in her anchorhold, were preserved and found their way into written history. They can be studied. Her spoken words penetrated the oral circuit; they are not a medium for study but for listening. An attentive ear will hear them reverberating in the full tones of the cathedral bells. For when Bertke died, the bells tolled the news of her death twice, as they did at the death of a prelate.

Building on an incarnation theology that ascribed a pivotal role to Mother Mary and maternal nature in the process of salvation, anchoresses secured a place for themselves in the Church. Grafting old folk traditions of the wise woman seer onto the Church’s gifts of grace, in this case the gift of prophecy, they at the same time won a place for themselves in the hearts of the faithful. Supported by a self-assured citizenry who were also open to God’s Word outside the mass and the Sacrament but contained—

or better, perhaps “enclosed”—within narrowly circumscribed limits, recluses secured for themselves a task in medieval religious practice almost equal to that of the parish priest. They did so in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and continued to do so in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Only the Reformation and the Counter Reformation created essentially different conditions, which led to a complete reassessment of roles.

Abbreviations

AASS	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i> (quoted from the new edition, Brussels 1868–1925, which has a continuous numbering of all 66 volumes)
AFP	<i>Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum</i>
AHEB	<i>Analectes pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique</i>
BHL	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina</i> . 4 vols. Subsidia Hagiographica 6,12,70. Brussels: Socii Bollandiani, 1898–1986
Byen Boeck	Thomas of Cantimpré, <i>Der Byen Boeck</i> [<i>Bonum Universale de Apibus</i>]
DDC	<i>Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique</i> . 7 vols. Paris, 1935–65
DHGE	<i>Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques</i> . Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1912–
DM	Caesarius of Heisterbach, <i>Dialogus Miraculorum</i>
DS	<i>Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité</i> . 17 vols. Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–95
DThC	<i>Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique</i> . Paris, 1930–
DVS	Guibert of Nogent, <i>De Vita Sua</i>
LM	Guibert of Nogent, <i>De Laude Mariae</i>
MEFRMA	<i>Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome: Moyen Âge et Temps Modernes</i>
MGH SS	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores</i>
OGE	<i>Ons Geestelijk Erf</i>
PL	J-P. Migne, <i>Patrologia cursus completus: Series latina</i> . 221 vols. Paris: Migne, 1861–64.
RB	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
RSPT	<i>Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
RTAM	<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale</i>
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
VB	<i>Vita Beatricis</i> [Beatrice of Nazareth]
VCM	Thomas of Cantimpré, <i>Vita Christinae Mirabilis</i> [Christina the Astonishing]
VIH	Hugh of Floreffe, <i>Vita Beatae Juettae</i> [Yvette of Huy]
VJ	<i>Vita Julianae</i> [Juliana of Cornillon]

<i>VMC</i>	Johannes Dominicanus, <i>Vita Margaretæ Contractæ</i> [Lame Margaret of Magdeburg]
<i>VMO</i>	James of Vitry, <i>Vita Mariæ Oigniacensis</i> [Mary of Oignies]
<i>VMY</i>	Thomas of Cantimpré, <i>Vita Margarethæ</i> [Margaret of Ypres]
<i>VO</i>	<i>Vita Odiliae</i>

Notes

Chapter 1

Note to epigraph: Statutes of Robert of Thourotte published by L. J. M. Philippen, *De Begijnhoven: Oorsprong, Geschiedenis, Inrichting* (Antwerp: Courtin, 1918), 303–4, which he dated as 1246. In Middle Dutch translation inserted in a charter from 1420, see Jan Paquay, “Het eerste statuut der begijnhoven,” *Verzamelde Opstellen* 11 (1935): 185–204. Unaffiliated women are told: “for among bees there is a king and cranes fly in a learned order, therefore it is worthy and reasonable that you who are reasonable creatures take such care to protect the condition of order from those outside.” That the metaphor of “bees without a king” was particularly used through the centuries for “eremites,” both male and female, is evident from Benedictus Papa XIV, *De Synodo Diocesana Libri tredecim*, VI, iii (Rome: Joannes Genrosus Salomoni, 1754), VI, 151, where bishops are required to issue “severiores etiam leges adversus eosdem Eremitas, tamquam apes sine rege, uti Doctores loquuntur, huc illuc discurrentes.”

1. DM.VIII, 53: ed. Strange, II, 125–26; Jaap van Moolenbroek, *Mirakels historisch: De exempels van Caesarius van Heisterbach over Nederland en Nederlanders* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1999), 116–22, here 117. Renée Nip, “The Arm of Saint John the Baptist,” conference paper *Saints and Communities*, Groningen 2000, investigated the historical background and suggested the city fire, archaeological evidence of which is dated in the 1190s. The arm of John the Baptist is mentioned in fourteenth-century letters of indulgence: see Folkert J. Bakker, “Groningen,” in *Bedevaartplaatsen in Nederland I: Noord- en Midden-Nederland*, ed. Peter J. Margry and Charles M. A. Caspers (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), 386–88.

2. See, for instance, the rather disappointing lemma by M.-C. Chartier, “Reclus,” in *DS*. XIII, 221–23; or how anchoresses are totally ignored in *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Hubert Jedin and Konrad Repgen, 7 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1962–79), III, i, 376–90. Even the seminal volume *L'eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli xi e xii*, Atti Mendola 1962 (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1965), devotes only brief attention to recluses in an addendum by Jean Hubert, “Les recluseries urbaines au Moyen Âge,” 485–87.

3. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture, c. 1150–1300: Virginity and Its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 24–27.

4. A good introduction can be found in the studies by Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq (preliminary studies for a comprehensive survey), such as “Le reclus dans la ville au bas Moyen Âge,” *Journal des savants* (1988): 219–62; “La femme

à la fenestrelle du reclusoir,” in *La Femme au Moyen Âge*, ed. Michel Rouche and Jean Heuclin (Maubeuge: Touzot, 1990), 49–68; “Les reclus parisiens au bas Moyen Âge,” in *Villes et sociétés urbaines au Moyen Âge*. Hommage Jacques Heers, ed. Georges Jehel et al. (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 1994), 223–31; “La femme, la recluse et la mort,” in *Muerte, religiosidad y cultura popular, siglos xiii-xviii*, ed. Eliseo Serrano Martín (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1994), 151–62; “Les reclus du Moyen Âge et l’information,” in *Zeitgeschichte und Darstellung im Mittelalter*, ed. Christoph Cormeau (Bonn: Bouvier, 1995), 200–220; “Reclus et recluses dans la mouvance des ordres religieux,” in *Les mouvances laïques des ordres religieux* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 1996), 201–18; and summarizing “La réclusion dans le milieu urbain français au Moyen Âge,” in *Ermîtes de France et d’Italie, (xie-xve siècle)*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: École française de Rome, 2003), 155–73. See also my short lemmas “Inklusen” and “Klause,” in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 9 vols. (Munich: Artemis, 1977–98), V, 424–25, 1195; Jean Leclercq, “Solitude and Solidarity: Medieval Women Recluses,” in *Medieval Religious Women II: Peace Weavers*, ed. Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 67–83; and Patricia J. F. Rosof, “The anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” in *ibidem*, 123–44. For the Netherlands, see Edmond van Wintershoven, “Recluseries et ermitages dans l’ancien diocèse de Liège,” *Bulletin de la Société scientifique et littéraire du Limbourg* 23 (1905): 96–159; and Lucas G. C. M. van Dijck, “Kluizenaresen in en rond ’s-Hertogenbosch, ca. 1370–1630,” *Varia Historica Brabantia* 9 (1980): 1–20.

5. Peter Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” repr. in *idem*, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London: Faber & Faber, 1982), 103–52; see also Henry Mayr-Harting’s study inspired by Peter Brown’s approach, “Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse,” *History* 60 (1975): 337–52.

6. André Vauchez, *La sainteté en occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge: D’après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1981); English translation: *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *idem*, *Saints, prophètes et visionnaires: Le pouvoir surnaturel au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999); Sofia Boesch Gajano, “Monastero, città, campagna: Il culto di S. Chelidonia a Subiaco tra XII e XVI secolo,” in the first volume produced by this group: *Culto dei santi: Istituzioni e classi sociali in età preindustriale*, ed. *idem* and Lucia Sebastiani (L’Aquila: Japadre, 1984), 227–60; Anna Benvenuti Papi, “‘Velut in sepulchro’: Cellane e recluse nella tradizione agiografica italiana,” in *idem*, “*In castro poenitentiae*: Santità e società femminile nell’Italia medievale” (Rome: Herder, 1990), 263–414; Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive: Profetie di corte e devozione femminile tra ‘400 e ‘500* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990); *idem*, “Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity in the Early Sixteenth Century,” in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 219–303, which comprises the heart of the book; and *Ermîtes de France et d’Italie*, ed. Vauchez. For France, see the studies of Paulette L’Hermite-Leclercq cited in note 4.

7. Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen, 1914; repr. Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968). A few inventories were made for the Continent as well, such as Louis Gougaud, *Ermîtes et reclus: Études sur d'anciennes formes de vie religieuse* (Vienne: Abbaye Saint-Martin de Ligugé, 1928); Armin Basedow, *Die Inklusen in Deutschland vornehmlich in der Gegend des Niederrheins um die Wende des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: Hörning, 1895); and Otmar Dörr, *Das Institut der Inklusen in Süddeutschland*, Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinerordens 18 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1934).

8. Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

9. Brenda M. Bolton, "Some Thirteenth-Century Women in the Low Countries: A Special Case?" *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 61 (1981): 7–29; see also her "Thirteenth-Century Religious Women: Further Reflections on the Low Countries 'Special Case,'" in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liège and Their Impact*, ed. Juliette Dor, Lesley Johnson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 129–57.

10. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, trans. introd., *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), where older literature is cited; Elisabeth McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards, eds., *Wombs and Tombs* (forthcoming); see also note 33.

11. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, "Woudvrouwen: Ierse Prinsessen als Klui-zenaressen in de Nederlanden," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 20 (1994): 1–23.

12. Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200–1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

13. For the theological development of *clausura*: Jean Leclercq, "La clôture: Points de repère historiques," *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 43 (1981): 367–76; Jane Tibbets Schulenberg, "Strict Active Enclosure and Its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience," in *Medieval Religious Women I: Distant Echoes*, ed. John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 51–86. In Chapter 5 (Eve) and the Epilogue, I discuss the medieval development of *clausura* in greater detail.

14. Benedict Haeften [Haeftenus], *S. Benedictus Illustratus sive Disquisitionum Monasticarum Libri XII* (Antwerp: apud Petrum Bellerum, 1644), VIII, ii, 84: it was an old custom of the Benedictines "ut iuxta monasteriorum essent quaedam cellulae, quas Clusas seu Inklusoria nominant. In quibus vna Sanctimonialis, vel plures includerentur sub potestate Abbatis." Ducange, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis* (Paris, 1842), III, 797: "Inclusi dicuntur monachi, qui aut prope vicos vel coenobia aut etiam in ipsis monasteriis in singulares cellas, ex iis non exiuri, vitae solitariae, quam alias consequi non licet, intuitu sese concludunt, ut Deo sibi vacent." Dörr, *Das Institut der Inklusen*, 1–4, describes *inclusoria* as small, relatively independent, closed women's communities at a men's abbey. The women of the *Ancrene Wisse* also seem to have lived in an *inclusorium*.

15. Johannes Asen, "Die Klausen in Köln," *Annales des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 117 (1927): 180–201, has an impressive list of eight late

medieval “Klausen,” where groups of five to ten women lived under *clausura*, often following the Rule of Augustine. However, these are more comparable to Windesheim convents under *inclusio* than to individual *recluseria*: see Floris Prims, “De Kloosterslotbeweging in Brabant in de xvde eeuw,” *Mededelingen KVAW: Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België* 6 (1944), 1: 5–35. Gougoud, *Ermîtes et reclus*, Appendice 119–27, edited the fifteenth-century statutes of the Reinold-Klause and the Nicholas-Klause in Cologne; see also Hartmut Beckers, “Eine wiederaufgefundene Handschrift der Regel, Statuten, Privilegien und Gewohnheiten der Terziarissenklause St. Vincent zu Köln aus dem Jahre 1532,” *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 40 (1976): 120–29.

16. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 352, 1534; Jan Frederik Niermeyer et al., *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 2002), I, 247–48; II, 1158; Ducange, *Glossarium*, II, 388–89; III, 797; V, 620. A more extensive comparison of *clausura*, *inclusorium*, and *reclusio* in medieval usage is not possible because the new large dictionaries have not yet been completed as far as the letter *r*.

17. I will publish an inventory of recluses in the lowlands in a separate study. The contemporary amazement can be seen in *Gesta Trevirorum Integra*, ed. Joannes Hugo Wyttenbach (Trier: Lintz, 1836), I, 315: “Deinceps etiam [early 13th c.] venerunt minores fratres et mulieres conversae ad religionem, in claustratae, reclusae, et inquestratae, quorum non est numerus.”

18. See Gabriella Signori, “Ohnmacht des Körpers—Macht der Sprache: Reklusion als Ordensalternative und Handlungsspielraum für Frauen,” in *Frauen zwischen Anpassung und Widerstand*, ed. Regula Ludi, Ruth Lüthi, and Regula Rytz (Zurich: Chronos, 1990), 25–42, here 28.

19. This is the title of the trailblazing study by Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 1053–75.

20. Jean Delumeau, ed., *Histoire vécue du peuple chrétien*, 2 vols. (Toulouse: Privat, 1979), here 8. The authors included in this volume want to shift attention from the “grands personnages, les dogmes et les institutions de l’Église” to the “champ religieux” and “le vécu religieux.”

21. For sources and references relating to each of the five women, see the relevant chapters.

22. See the groundbreaking studies of Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 157; idem, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 169–93, at 175.

23. See the exhibition *Gebed in Schoonheid* in the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam and the accompanying study by Henk van Os, *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe, 1300–1500* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994). In places where mendicant monks had settled in the thirteenth century their churches could also become focal points.

24. Arnold Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 44–67.

25. Broeder Geraert, *Sinte Kerstinen heiligen leven*, vv. 611–14; ed. Maurits

Gijsseling, *Corpus van Middelnederlandse teksten (tot en met het jaar 1300)*, II, 6: *Sinte Luigart, Sinte Kerstine, Nederrijns Moraalboek* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1987), 104–53, here 119.

26. See the balanced verdict on the so-called *Frauenfrage* by Walter Simons, “Een zeker bestaan: De Zuid-Nederlandse begijnen en de *Frauenfrage*, 13de–18de eeuw,” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 17 (1991): 125–46, who holds to the idea of a relative surplus of women, a problem he presents as characteristic of cities right into the nineteenth century; and his *Cities of Ladies*, where he describes the beguines “as a religious ‘movement’ of the laity . . . promoted by urban conditions and . . . characterized by the gender of its participants.” The hypothesis put forth by Alcantara Mens, *Oorsprong en betekenis van de Nederlandse Begijnen- en Begardenbeweging: Vergelijkende studie, xiiie–xiiiie eeuw* (Antwerp: Standaard Boekhandel, 1947), 320–402, that women first settled for the enclosed life of recluses as an emergency measure and from there opted for the freer life of the beguines, and that the recluse ideal was imported from Byzantium, is not supported by the sources.

27. Anna Benvenuti, “Religjöse Frauen im Florenz des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts,” in *Fromme Frauen oder Ketzerinnen? Leben und Verfolgung der Beginen im Mittelalter*, ed. Martina Wehrli-Johns and Claudia Opitz (Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 53–95, here 55, finds the same true of Florence.

28. *Analecta Gijssberti Coeverincx*: ed. G. van den Elsen and W. Hoevenaars, 2 vols. (’s-Hertogenbosch: Provinciaal Genootschap Noord-Brabant 1905–07), II, 70. Cf. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 75.

29. *La Règle de Saint Benoît*: ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, 3 vols., SC 182 (Paris: Cerf, 1972), I, 35, 436–38: after the first “genus” of cenobites Benedict distinguished: “secundum genus est anachoritarum, id est heremitarum.” The Council in Trullo (692) decided that monks had to spend three years in total seclusion within their own monastery plus one probationary year in a cell before they could be enclosed outside the monastery; see Charles J. Hefele and Henry Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles d’après les documents originaux*, 11 vols. (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1907–52), IIIA, 568. In some cases permission was also requested of the local bishop; see *MGH. Leges I. Capitularia Karoli Magni* (Hanover, 1835), 73, on the Council of Frankfurt. The Carolingian *Regula Solitiorum* of Grimlaicus was written for these reclusive monks and not for recluses in general, as is still held by Karl S. Frank, “Grimlaicus, ‘Regula Solitiorum,’” in *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter*, Festschrift Kaspar Elm, ed. Franz J. Felten and Nikolas Jaspert (Berlin: Duncker & Humbolt, 1997), 21–35.

30. “Nullus vel nulla recludatur absque licentia Episcopi,” in *Cartulaire de l’Église de Saint-Lambert de Liège*, ed. Stanislas Bormans and Emile Schoolmeesters, 6 vols. (Brussels: Comm. Royale d’Histoire, 1893–1933), I, 135. After that date the bishop indeed seems to have asserted this right. Yvette of Huy was enclosed before 1202, which explains why the ritual was performed by an abbot, but young women in her circle depended on the bishop. Cf. Warren, *Anchorites*, 53–58.

31. Jean Paquay, “Un document très important, établissant l’origine liégeoise de l’institut des béguines,” *AHEB* 20 (1886): 125–28, here 126. In Chapter 5 (Eve) and the Epilogue I return to this source.

32. See Chapter 5 (Eve).

33. Savage-Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 74, 204. Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives*, 29, note 40, and page 30, points out that *Ancrene* is plural; it is therefore a rule for a group of enclosed women and not for an individual recluse. She concludes: "on that text's own evidence we should see here not the single enclosed female body, but a miniature female community."

34. Cf. Constable, *Three Studies*, 145–68.

35. In the United States the term "vernacular theology" has been introduced and in Germany "narrative theology," but I prefer "common theology" because of the analogy with the longstanding legal term of "common law" as a complex distinct from written Roman law but at the same time as "legal" and as generally accepted as Roman law. See, for vernacular theology, Bernard McGinn, *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 4–14; and the studies of Nicholas Watson elaborating on these ideas. The German discussion in particular is of interest here. Georg Steer, "Der Laie als Anreger und Adressat deutscher Prosaliteratur im 14. Jahrhundert," in *Zur deutschen Literatur und Sprache des 14. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Walter Haug, Timothy R. Jackson, and Johannes Janota (Heidelberg: Winter, 1983), 354–67, points out on 362 that terms like "Laientheologie" (lay theology) and "Laienspiritualität" (lay spirituality) have negative connotations and for that reason should be avoided. Béatrice W. Acklin Zimmermann, *Gott im Denken berühren: Die theologischen Implikationen der Nonnenviten* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg, 1993), speaks of "narrative theology" in the fourteenth-century Sister Books in Germany. See also her discussion of Marianne Heimbach's thesis, "*Der ungelehrte Mund*" als *Autorität: Mystische Erfahrung als Quelle kirchlich-prophetischer Rede im Werk Mechthilds von Magdeburg* (Stuttgart: Frommann & Holzborg, 1989), who uses the term "Erfahrungstheologie" (experience theology): in Zimmermann, "Neue Perspektiven für die theologische Erschließung sogenannter frauenmystischer Literatur," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 38 (1991): 175–91. I return to this terminology in Chapter 7.

36. After considering each of the five recluses separately, in Chapter 7 I shall discuss the place of the reclusive life as such in the general history of eremitism.

37. Rom. 16: 1; see, for the exegesis, Roger Gryson, *Le ministère des femmes dans l'Église ancienne* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1972), 22–23.

38. *VCM*, IV, 40: 657.

39. *Constitutiones Apostolorum* VIII, 19–20: ed. trans. Marcel Metzger, *Les constitutions apostoliques*, 3 vols., SC 320, 329, 336 (Paris: Cerf, 1985–87), III, 221–23.

40. Gryson, *Le ministère*, 107–8, with commentary. *Constitutiones Apostolorum* II, 26, 6: I, 239: "Considérez la diaconesse comme représentant le Saint-Esprit . . . et comme il n'est pas possible de croire au Christ sans être instruit par l'Esprit, ainsi qu'aucune femme n'aborde le diacre ou l'évêque sans passer par la diaconesse." One of her tasks in the early Church was to conduct the rite of baptism for women.

41. Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996), 46.

42. See Chapter 2.

43. Gryson, *Ministère*, 171, 168, 169, provides examples. Cf. Jean Leclercq, “Eucharistic Celebrations Without Priests in the Middle Ages,” *Workshop* 55 (1980): 160–68; and Eric Palazzo, “Les formulaires de bénédiction et de consécration des veuves au cours du haut Moyen Âge,” in *Veuves et veuvage dans le haut Moyen Âge*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris: Picard, 1993), 31–36.

44. Gisela Muschiol, *Famula Dei: Zur Liturgie in merowingischen Frauenklöstern* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1994); Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women I: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England*, 2 vols. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), I, 98–100, 128: “Nunne,” derived from the Latin *nonna*, grandmother, formed a category of its own distinct from cloistered monks, *muncas*, and nuns, *myneccanas*. Cf. Jane Tibbets Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, ca. 500–1100* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 59–125.

45. Joannes D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* (Paris: Welter, 1902), XV, 882. This qualification was taken over from the Council of Chalcedon (451) and Justinian law; see Gryson, *Ministère*, 109–10, 123; see also my discussion of the life stages in Chapter 7.

46. Janet L. Nelson, “The Wary Widow,” in *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 82–113, here 92. Muschiol, *Famula Dei*, 295–300, here 296, speaks of “ein real existierendes Amt” for which the widow’s blessing was sufficient.

47. See the seminal study by John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970); Karl Bosl, “Laienfrömmigkeit und religiöse Bewegung in der Spannung zwischen Orthodoxie und Häresie im europäischen 12. Jahrhundert,” in idem, *Historia Magistra: Die geschichtliche Dimension der Bildung*, ed. Hubert Freilinger (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1988), 86–112; and Christopher N. L. Brooke, “Priest, Deacon and Layman, from St Peter Damian to St Francis,” in *Studies in Church History* 26. *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay*, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 65–85. Rosa Maria Dessi and Michel Lauwers, eds., *La parole du prédicateur, v–xv siècles* (Nice: Centre d’Études médiévales, 1997), 16, refer to a (Darwinist) “mutation” in the priesthood of the eleventh century.

48. This was the path taken by Lutgart of Tongeren, who was portrayed as the model female religious by Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardi*: ed. AASS, 16 Junii, XXIV, at II, i, 1–2: 196; II, i, 9: 198; III, i, 4: 205.

49. Arno Borst, “Religiöse und geistige Bewegungen im Hochmittelalter,” in *Propyläen Weltgeschichte: Eine Universalgeschichte*, ed. Golo Mann and August Nitschke (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1963), V, 489–560, here 507.

50. John Van Engen, “The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 519–52, here 542. A good example is the parish of St Christophe in Liège with Lambert li Bèges; see Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 24–34, here 28–31.

51. John Skinner, *Medieval Popular Religion, 1000–1500: A Reader* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 1997), xv.

52. See the comprehensive study by Jean Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule du Nord: Ermites et reclus du ve au xie siècle* (Lille: Presses Universitaires, 1988), which notes an almost total absence of women.

53. Lamprecht von Regensburg, *Sankt Franciskens Leben und Tochter Sion*, ed. Karl Weinhold (Paderborn, 1880), 430.

54. Hadewijch, *Visioenen*: ed. Frank Willaert, trans. Imme Dros (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1996), 151–63. Of the 57 contemporaries mentioned by Hadewych, 35 were women and 22 men; 21 of them lived as anchorites or anchoresses; the great majority of the perfect living persons, 41, lived in the territories I have defined as my research area. We do not know with certainty that this list was drawn up by Hadewych herself, but it is thirteenth-century, the relevant point for my research.

55. Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200–1500)*, vol. III of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 31–32, therefore uses the term Lotharingia to indicate this general area: he maintains that Lotharingia and Umbria were the centers of the new *vita apostolica*.

56. Michel Parisse, “Les chanoinesses dans l’empire germanique (ix–xi s.),” *Francia* 6 (1978): 107–26.

57. Gerd Althoff, “Gandersheim und Quedlinburg: Ottonische Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Ueberlieferungszentren,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25 (1991): 123–44, here 134; cf. for Italy Giulia Barone, “Society and Women’s Religiosity, 750–1450,” in Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri, eds., *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 42–71.

58. Peter Biller, “Women and Texts in Languedocian Catharism,” in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), I, 171–82, here 182; Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 7.

59. Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich: Beck, 1990); English trans. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, “Hagiografische Forschungen in den Niederlanden,” *Hagiographica* 6 (1999): 153–68.

Chapter 2

1. Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*: ed. trans. Edmond-René Labande, *Les Classiques de l’Histoire de France au Moyen Âge* 34 (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1981), especially chapters 12–14. English trans. Paul J. Archambault, *A Monk’s Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996); and John F. Benton, *Self and Society in Medieval France: The Memoirs of Abbot Guibert of Nogent*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 15 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1984). Unless specific references to other chapters

are given (with *DVS*, book, chapter, and page number from the Labande edition), the information is drawn from the above-mentioned chapters 12–14. Quotations from Benton’s translation are given with Benton and page number.

The autobiography is our only source for the mother’s life. Assuming, as Labande does, that Guibert was born in 1055 (or ca. 1064, according to Benton’s less convincing estimate), the mother must have been born ca. 1030 (or, in Benton’s chronology, ca. 1040); see below for her life story. At her enclosure in 1067 (Benton 1077), when G. was 12 years old, she must have been at least 35 to 40. This means she was ca. 75 (Benton 65) when Guibert was elected abbot in 1104.

A good deal has been written about the mother-son relationship, but always from a psychohistorical perspective; most recently: Nancy Partner, “The Family Romance of Guibert of Nogent: His Story/Her Story,” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland, 1996), 359–79. I share the opinion of Trudy Lemmers, *Guibert van Nogents Monodiae: Een twaalfde-eeuwse visie op kerkelijk leiderschap* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998), 73, that this fails to do justice to Guibert’s own intention for his book. “By describing her [and his own] life, he wants to translate God’s love more clearly to the human level.” I am grateful to Lemmers for her comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

2. *DVS*. I, 8–11: 48–74.

3. *DVS*. I, 11: 74; Benton 63.

4. *DVS*. I, 3: 16–24; Benton 43.

5. She could appeal to decrees issued by Merovingian and Carolingian councils; see below.

6. Theodore Evergates, ed., *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

7. *DVS*. I, 4–6: 24–42. He later acted as her manager, “steward in her house” (*DVS*. I, 14: 98) and followed her to St. Germer.

8. The family must have employed several chaplains: *DVS*. I, 3: 18; I, 4: 26; I, 13: 96.

9. *DVS*. I, 13: 96.

10. *DVS*. I, 12: 84. Gregory the Great was for the mother and the son the embodiment of true wisdom and the spiritual life; see below.

11. *DVS*. I, 14: 100: “Exstructis itaque inibi aediculis prope ecclesiam,” in other words, a small house or cell near the church. St. Germer-de-Fly was one of the prominent old abbeys of northern France; it was founded by Germer, supposedly a Merovingian court official who after his wife died and his son reached adulthood withdrew to a hermitage and founded a monastery. Rebuilt after the Norman invasions in the eleventh century by the prince-bishop of Beauvais, whose successors we encounter in *DVS* as mediating authorities, the abbey church was dedicated to Mary, as was the High Gothic “Sainte Chapelle” added to the structure in the thirteenth century. The striking Mary cycle of its stained-glass windows seems to illustrate Guibert’s theology. St. Germer was a male abbey, but women lived there as well; see *De S. Germano Abbate*, in *AASS*, 24 Septembris, XXXXVI, 692–708; *Gallia Christiana IX-X: Provincia Remensi* (Paris: Bibliotheca Regia, 1751), IX, 694, 708, 787–812, published by the congregation

of St. Maur, which resided in the abbey from 1644 onward. The Maurist Jean-Baptiste de Boulongne wrote ca. 1700 *Historia Flaviacensis Monasterii*, which includes a cartularium, Paris, BN lat. 13890 (the section on Guibert and his mother is taken from Guibert's autobiography; here, too, the mother remains nameless); finally *L'Église abbatiale et la Sainte Chapelle de Saint-Germer-de-Fly*, Bulletin 80–81 (1997), edited by the Groupe d'Étude des Monuments et Oeuvres d'Art de l'Oise et du Beauvaisis.

12. Guibert was received into the abbey a few months after his mother: *DVS*. I, 15: 108; about his older brother we hear that he later accompanied Guibert to Nogent and then returned to St. Germer: II, 4: 242; the old abbot: I, 15: 108; the young abbot: II, 4: 244; family and domestic staff: I, 15: 108; I, 24: 190.

13. *DVS*. I, 14: 102–4; Benton 75, abridgement mine.

14. *DVS*. I, 14: 104. For *ruminatio*, see Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catherine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974).

15. Illegitimate child: *DVS*. I, 18: 150; visions: I, 14: 98; I, 16: 122; I, 16: 128; I, 18: 146, where we are told that her soul leaves her body and sees both her deceased husband suffering and the old nun, as well as the imminent death of a knight; I, 19: 168; reading other people's thoughts: I, 16: 122.

16. *DVS*. I, 16: 128; cf. Benton 84–85; Mary, we remember, was the patron saint of the abbey church.

17. *DVS*. I, 17: 138–40; Benton 89.

18. *DVS*. I, 14: 106; I, 19: 168: “de talibus disputantem non illiteratam, quod erat, foeminam, sed disertissimum episcopum aestimares.”

19. *DVS*. I, 19: 166–68; Benton 101.

20. *DVS*. II, 4: 244.

21. *DVS*. II, 4: 244: “Viduas velare pontificum nullus attendet,” quoted from Ivo of Chartres, *Decretum* VII, 55: ed. *PL* 161, 557A.

22. Cyrille Vogel and Reinhard Else, *Le pontifical romano-germanique du dixième siècle*, 3 vols. (Città del Vaticano, 1963), I, 54–62, with 55–56 the consecratio of the deaconess: “Deus qui Annam filiam Phanuelis vix per annos septem sortitam iugale coniugium ita annos octoginta quatuor in sancta et intemerata viduitate servasti, ut noctibus ac diebus orationes ieiuniaque miscentem, usque ad prophetiae gratiam sub circumcisione Christi tui, iustus remunerator adduceres, quique deinceps per apostolicam intentionem, sanctarum huius ordinationis manibus feminarum sexum ipsius adolescentulas ac iuniores instrui cum sancti chrismatis visitatione iussisti.”

23. At the Council of Epaonense, 517: “Veduarum consecrationem, quas diaconas uocitant, ab omni regione nostra paenitus abrogamus,” the consecration of widows, which had merged with the ordination of deaconesses, was abolished: ed. Carolus de Clercq, *Concilia Galliae (511–695)*, Corpus Christianorum Latinorum 148A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1963), 187, 29; Aimé Georges Martimort, *Les diaconesses: Essai historique* (Rome: Edizioni liturgiche, 1982), 207–17, with the quotation from Atto of Vercelli on 210, note 54. The recent introduction by Emmanuelle Santinelli, *Des femmes éplorées? Les veuves dans la société aristocratique du haut Moyen Âge* (Lille: Septentrion, 2003), lacks an eye for these issues.

24. Martimort, *Les diaconesses*, 222, with the quotation from Abelard's Letter VIII: "diaconissam, quam nunc abbatissam nominant," to whom he ascribed "vicem imperatoris cui per omnia obeditur ab omnibus."

25. Friedrich Maassen, *Glossen des canonischen Rechts aus dem Karolingischen Zeitalter*, in Akademie der Wissenschaften Wien: Phil.-hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte 84 (1876), 274, concludes from the glosses that the deaconess consecration may have been reintroduced as a way to provide a suitable title for queens and princesses who withdrew to an abbey that already had an abbess, as well as for lay abbesses. This is an attractive hypothesis in the case of Guibert's mother. Cf. Daniela Müller, "Vir caput mulieris: Zur Stellung der Frau im Kirchenrecht unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts," in *Vom mittelalterlichen Recht zur neuzeitlichen Rechtswissenschaft*, ed. Norbert Brieskorn et al. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1994), 223–45.

26. Giles Constable, "The Ceremonies and Symbolism of Entering Religious Life and Taking the Monastic Habit, from the Fourth to the Twelfth Century," in *Segni e Riti nella Chiesa altomedievale occidentale* (Spoleto: Centro di Studi, 1987), II, 771–834, here 772, quoting from Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London & New York: Ark Paperback, 1984), 67.

27. Edmond-René Labande, "L'art de Guibert de Nogent," in *Économies et sociétés au Moyen Âge*, Mélanges Eduard Perroy (Paris: Publications Sorbonne, 1973), 608–25, here 624; *DVS*, xi, note 2; see Wilfried M. Grauwen, "Guibert van Nogent en Norbert van Gennepe," *Analecta Praemonstratensia* 59 (1983): 206–20; and Jacques Chaurand, "La conception de l'histoire de Guibert de Nogent," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 8 (1965): 381–95.

28. Wis. 7: 30, 8: 1. *DVS*, I, 17: 142; Benton 90; preserved as Sermo 702 under the *Opera Omnia* of Bernard of Clairvaux and published in *PL* 184, 1031–44. Lemmers, *Guibert van Nogents Monodiae*, 156–60, considers this the essence of Guibert's idea of ecclesiastical leadership. She is certainly right, but it is also more than that.

29. Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), xi and passim.

30. *DVS*, I, 4: 26. Ernst Rolf Hintz, *Learning and Persuasion in the German Middle Ages* (New York: Garland, 1997), 22, maintains that Gregory in his *Regula Pastoralis* summarized late classical ideas about learning through the loving imitation of good examples. This is precisely what the mother did.

31. *DVS*, I, 4: 28.

32. *DVS*, I, 19: 164. For a modern interpretation of Guibert's spiritual crisis, see Robert I. Moore, "Guibert of Nogent and His World," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis*, ed. Henry Mayr-Harting and Robert I. Moore (London: Hambledon, 1985), 107–17.

33. Edmond-René Labande, "Guibert de Nogent, disciple et témoin d'Anselme au Bec," in *Les mutations socio-culturelles au tournant des xie-xiiiè siècles*, ed. Raymonde Foreville (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1984), 229–56; Jaroslav Pelikan, "A First-Generation Anselmian, Guibert of Nogent," in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History*, Festschrift George Huntston Williams, ed.

F. Forrester Church and Timothy George (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 71–82, here 74 (Eucharist) and 76–77 (mediatrix).

34. François Dolbeau, “Deux nouveaux manuscrits des *Memoires* de Guibert de Nogent,” *Sacris Erudiri* 26 (1983): 155–76; cf. Monique-Cécile Garand, “Le scriptorium de Guibert de Nogent,” *Scriptorium* 31 (1977): 3–29. Boulongne, *Historia Flaviacensis*, also appears to be based on d’Archery.

35. Nicolaus Staubach, “*Diversa raptim undique collecta*: Das Rapiarium im geistlichen Reformprogramm der Devotio moderna,” in *Literarische Formen des Mittelalters: Florilegien, Kompilationen, Kollektionen*, ed. Kaspar Elm (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 115–47. I return to the genre of notebooks in Chapter 5 (Eve).

36. Partner, “The Family Romance,” 372.

37. *DVS*. I, 9: 52–58, where Guibert writes of a “libellulum.” “Uncle” and “nephew” are my rendering of the *consanguinitas* in the text. Evard has the same name as Guibert’s father; he must therefore have been a relative on his father’s side.

38. See note 28.

39. *Capitula Episcoporum* I: ed. P. Brommer in *MGH Capitula episcoporum* (Hanover, 1984–), I, 168, 4: “Nullaque est necessitas uxores ducere, qui non per carnis successionem, sed per morum imitationem in sacerdotio subrogantur.” I owe this reference to Maayke de Jong (Utrecht).

40. William of St. Thierry, *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, Lettre aux Frères du Mont-Dieu: Lettre d’Or*: ed. trans. Jean M. Déchanet, SC 223 (Paris: Cerf, 1975), 224–25.

41. This same Theodulphus who wrote about the *imitatio morum* of young priests wanted them to open schools in the cities and villages so that everyone would be able to receive schooling; see Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 220–23.

42. About Yvette of Huy, her biographer wrote, *VIIH*. V, 14: 148: “rebus potius, quam verbis edocta, prout in libro experientiae didicerat.” On oral and written culture, see the groundbreaking work of Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); also the fine study by Horst Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen, Schrift und Bild: Kultur und Gedächtnis im Mittelalter* (Munich: Beck, 1995); and Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). On women’s role in this culture, see Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995).

43. The discussion about this pair of concepts was initiated by Herbert Grundmann in his study, still valuable today, “*Litteratus-Illiteratus*: Der Wandel einer Bildungsnorm vom Altertum zum Mittelalter,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 40 (1958): 1–65; see also Clanchy, *From Memory*; and Peter Biller, “Heresy and Literacy: Earlier History of the Theme,” introduction to *Heresy and Literacy, 1000–1530*, ed. idem and Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1–18. The most revealing example is still Hildegard of Bingen, who

despite her Latin learning continued to call herself *indocta* (in Latin!); see Jeroen Deploige, *In Nomine femineo indocta: Kennisprofiel en ideologie van Hildegard van Bingen* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998).

44. Robert I. Moore, "Heresy, Repression, and Social Change in the Age of Gregorian Reform," in *Christendom and Its Discontents: Exclusion, Persecution, and Rebellion, 1000–1500*, ed. Scott L. Waugh and Peter D. Diehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19–46, here 39; see also Alcuin Blamires, "The Limits of Bible Study for Medieval Women," in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Smith and Taylor, I, 1–12.

45. Rita Copeland, "Why Women Can't Read: Medieval Hermeneutics, Statutory Law, and the Lollard Heresy Trials," in *Representing Women: Law, Literature, and Feminism*, ed. Susan Sage Heinzelman and Zipporah Batshaw Wiseman (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), 253: "Women and books don't mix."

46. On this and the following, see my "The Metamorphosis of Woman: Transmission of Knowledge and the Problems of Gender," *Gender and History* 12 (2000): 642–64.

47. *DVS*, I, 17: 134.

48. William of St. Thierry, *Lettre*, 173: "Quantum enim videt, vel intelligit [Deum] cui offert, tantum ei in affectu est, et ei amor ipse intellectus est," quoted in Jean M. Déchanet, "*Amor Ipse Intellectus est*," *Revue du Moyen Âge Latin* 1 (1945): 349–74.

49. See below, Chapter 4 (Juliana), Chapter 7 (Living Saints).

50. The twelfth-century nuns of Admont (Austria) offer a fascinating glimpse of actual historical practice. They listened secretly to Abbot Irimbert and "transcribed his biblical commentaries (without Irimbert's knowledge) based solely on what they could hear of his teaching through the window of the chapter house, their only opening to the outside world"; from Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 35.

51. *Herimanni Liber de restauratione monasterii Sancti Martini Tornacensis*: ed. George Waitz, in *MGH. SS*, XIV, 274–317; English trans. Lynn H. Nelson, *Herman of Tournai: The Restoration of the Monastery of Saint Martin of Tournai* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 13–20, quotations 14, 18. Another example is Rupert of Deutz, who aside from his education "received the spiritual gift of interpretation . . . which brought him that deeper understanding of Scripture which 'authorized' his own writing," from John Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 349. In Chapter 7 I will return to Rupert as a possible source of inspiration for prophetic women.

52. Theologians educated in monasteries, like Rupert of Deutz, William of St. Thierry, and Bernard of Clairvaux, would further defend the merging of the two roads, reason and love, schooling and spiritual training, books and inspiration. Jean Leclercq accordingly identifies two distinct theologies, a monastic and a scholastic variety; see "The Renewal of Theology," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson, Giles Constable, and

Carol D. Lanham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 68–87. For reasons stated in the Introduction I prefer the term “common theology.”

53. Guibert of Nogent, *Liber de laude Sancte Mariae* [LM]: ed. PL, 156, 537–78.

54. LM. I: 537C.

55. LM. II: 539D; cf. II: 541B.

56. LM. III: 541–42B: “Haec est thronus. . . . *Qui habeat sex gradus, et summitas throni rotunda erat in parte posteriori* (I Kings 10: 19). Sex gradus sunt timor et pietas, scientia et fortitudo, consilium et intellectus, quibus pervenit ipsa ad eum, qui sibi specialiter praesedit sapientiam Christum. Summitas throni, singularis eminentia est Genitricis Dei.”

57. LM. V: 543–51; VI, 556C: “Proprium ipsi est misereri, utpote sequester [mediator] inter Deum et homines”; and VI: 557A: “Ipsi plane misereri est proprium, quia quae se ad tanti immensitatem officii [was compassion her “profession”?] misericorditer a Deo pendit assumptam, factamque inter ipsum Deum hominesque sequestram, non immerito adeo specialia ad nos habet viscera, ex quibus et propter quos est tam singulariter excellens ut misericordiam consequemur effecta”; VI: 557: “mediator;” XIV: 577: “Salvatrix.”

58. Cf. DVS. I, 19: 164.

59. Hugo de Balma, *Théologie mystique*: ed. trans. Francis Ruello and Jeanne Barbet, SC 408–9 (Paris: Cerf, 1995–96), II, 48–50: 29, “O ergo Sapientia aeterna, quia nullus mortalium potest manifestare istam admirabilem et increatam Sapientiam quae a te fonte vitae immediate procedit, ‘veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiae.’ Quia ergo haec sapientia, ut dictum est, persuaderi potest ab homine, sed non doceri, ideo te, beatissime Deus . . . ita tuos amatores adimpleas. . . .” I owe this reference to Dan Sheerin from Notre Dame.

60. LM. 543A. Guibert makes Mary so “unique” here that she became an ideal out of reach for “ordinary” women; see Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976). Guibert is here possibly giving the “politically correct” view of Mary, conceived from his clerical position, whereas, in the autobiography, he is describing actual religious practice as lived by mother and son, or at least Guibert’s view of religion as practiced. See Hedwig Röckelein, “Zwischen Mutter und Maria: Die Rolle der Frauen in Guibert de Nogents Autobiographie,” in *Maria: Abbild oder Vorbild? Zur Sozialgeschichte mittelalterlicher Marienverehrung*, ed. idem et al. (Tübingen: Diskord, 1990), 91–109.

61. DVS. I, 14: 104.

62. Richard W. Southern, ed. trans., *The Life of St. Anselm* (Oxford: Nelson Texts, 1963), 29–30; cf. Arjo Vanderjagt, “The Performative Heart of St Anselm’s ‘Proslogion,’” in *Anselm, Aosta, Bec, and Canterbury*, ed. David E. Luscombe and Gillian R. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 228–37.

63. See note 14.

64. See Chapter 4 (Juliana).

65. See my “The Metamorphosis of Woman,” in particular 655–57.

66. Peter Dinzelsbacher, “Heilige oder Hexen?” in *Religiöse Devianz: Untersuchungen zu sozialen, rechtlichen und theologischen Reaktionen auf religiöse*

Abweichung im westlichen und östlichen Mittelalter, ed. Dieter Simon (Frankfurt am M.: Klostermann, 1990), 41–60, here 46, gives the poignant example of Sybilla, a beguine from Marsal (Metz) who claimed to be fed by angels. After being put in a convent and secretly watched by Dominicans, it appeared that she was visited, or fed, at night by a young priest. Once locked in a cell with only a small window, she soon died. This sort of thing would not have happened to an anchoress.

67. Pauline Stafford, “Queen Emma, Women and Power in the Eleventh Century,” in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne G. Duggan (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), 3–26, here 11; by power Stafford does not mean “coercive power” but “the ability to act effectively, to take part in events with some chance of success.” This is also what I claim for anchoresses.

68. Kees Samplonius, “From Veleda to the Völva: Aspects of Female Divination in Germanic Culture,” in *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (New York: Garland, 1995), 69–99. See also Heide Dienst, “Zur Rolle von Frauen in magischen Vorstellungen und Praktiken—nach ausgewählten mittelalterlichen Quellen,” in *Frauen in Spätantike und Mittelalter: Lebensbedingungen—Lebensnormen—Lebensformen*, ed. Werner Affeldt (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1990), 173–94, here 181: “Exempla für die Inanspruchnahme divinatorischer Dienste, ganz besonders von Einsiedlern und Reklusen beiderlei Geschlechts.”

69. See Chapter 7.

70. *DVS*, I, 6: 38.

Chapter 3

1. Hugh of Floreffe, *Vita Beatae Juettae sive Juttae, viduae reclusae, Hui in Belgio*, in *AASS*, 13 Januarii: II, 145–69, here referred to with *VIH* with chapter, paragraph, and page number; *BHL* 4620. Translations are my own unless specific references (with page number) are given to the English translation by Jo Ann McNamara, *The Life of Yvette of Huy by Hugh of Floreffe* (Toronto: Peregina Publishing, 2000). Chrysostomus Henriquez, *Lilia Cistercii sive sacrarum virginum Cisterciensium Origo, Instituta et Res Gestae*, 2 vols. (Douai, 1633), II, 6–83, published an expurgated version. Apart from the *vita* and documentary evidence concerning the leprosarium, no sources are preserved and little was written about Yvette (or Ivetta, the French form of her name, or Jutta, the Middle Dutch form)—see Mens, *Oorsprong*, 384–402; and Isabelle Cochelin, “Sainteté laïque: L'exemple de Juetta de Huy (1158–1228),” *Le Moyen Âge* 95 (1989): 396–417—until three studies appeared in one year: Jennifer Carpenter, “Juetta of Huy, Recluse and Mother (1158–1228): Children and Mothering in the Saintly Life,” in *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, ed. idem and Sally-Beth MacLean (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 57–93; Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, “Ivetta of Huy: Mater et Magistra,” in *Sanctity and Motherhood*, 225–58; and Georges Duby, *Dames au xiii^e siècle I: Heloïse, Aliénor, Isent et quelques autres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 133–49. See also McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, 190–92; and R. Aubert, “Juette,” in *DHGE* fasc. 163, 2001, 433–34.

2. André Joris, *La Ville de Huy au Moyen Âge: Des origines à la fin du xive siècle* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1959). The convent is known by the name of Sainte Marie Madeleine or Grands Malades; see Joseph Daris, "Notes historiques sur Huy," *AHEB* 14 (1877): 36–77.

3. *VIH.* XXI, 60–61: 157; see Mens, *Oorsprong*, 384–402; and Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 35–60, who does not consider the community a beguinage. Cf. Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture: With Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954), 152, 322.

4. *VIH.* XV, 45: 154.

5. *VIH.* XV, 46: 154; cf. John 19: 27; see note 69 below.

6. *VIH.* XXII, 64: 158, with a lengthy digression on the significance of motherhood. I will come back to this in Chapter 7. Here an overview of the other testimony of Yvette's relationship with Mary: *VIH.* VIII, 24: 150; IX, 25: 150; XX, 58: 157; XXII, 63: 158; XXVII, 83: 161; XLVIII, 118: 167; XLIX, 119: 167.

7. *VIH.* XIV, 42: 153.

8. *VIH.* XXII, 62–63: 157–58.

9. *VIH.* XXVI, 82: 161.

10. *VIH.* XXVIII, 85–86: 161.

11. *VIH.* XXVII, 83–84: 161.

12. *VIH.* XXXV, 97: 163. In other thirteenth-century vitae from Brabant we encounter other young men who sought support from Yvette.

13. This is one of the passages that indicate that Yvette possessed considerable knowledge of the Bible and probably had a good education behind her; see below.

14. *VIH.* XXX, 88–89: 161–62.

15. Norbert Backmund, *Die mittelalterlichen Geschichtsschreiber des Praemonstratenserordens* (Averbode: Praemonstratensia, 1972), 223–24, describes the work as "so well organized and written in such a polished style that it stands out among the many contemporary documents of this sort. Also striking is its balanced, sober objectivity—one could actually call it a kind of model *vita* of the thirteenth century." See also Sylvain Balau, *Étude critique des sources de l'histoire du pays de Liège au Moyen Âge* (Brussels: Hayez, 1903), 436–37. Cf. Simone Roisin, *L'hagiographie cistercienne dans le diocèse de Liège au xiii^e siècle* (Louvain: Bibliothèque de l'Université, 1947).

16. *VIH.* Prologus, 6: 146. Cf. Albert d'Haenens, "Femmes excédentaires et vocation religieuse dans l'ancien diocèse de Liège lors de l'essor urbain," in *Hommages à la Wallonie*, Mélanges offerts à Maurice Arnould et Pierre Ruelle, ed. Hervé Haquin (Brussels: Université libre de Bruxelles, 1981), 217–35.

17. *VIH.* Prologus, 7: 147: "ne quis tamen fabulosarum me rerum inventorem aut somniorum commentetur interpretem, quia animalis homo non percipit ea quae sunt Spiritus Dei"; *VIH.* XLI, 109: 165: "somnia prorsus esse aut truffas, quas vetulae aut mulierculae pauperes, vilesque personulae visiones Dei annuntiant esse." The author here appears to be drawing on the terminology of James of Vitry.

18. *VIH*. IX, 28: 151.

19. André Vauchez, “Prosélytisme et action antihérétique en milieu féminin au xiii^e siècle: La *Vie de Marie d’Oignies* (d. 1213) par Jacques de Vitry,” in *Problèmes d’histoire du Christianisme*, ed. Jean Marx (Brussels: Éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 1987), 95–110; Michel Lauwers, “Expérience béguinale et récit hagiographique: À propos de la ‘Vita Mariae Oigniacensis’ de Jacques de Vitry (vers 1215),” *Journal des savants* 1989: 61–103; idem, “Entre Béguinisme et Mysticisme: La *Vie de Marie d’Oignies* (d. 1213) de Jacques de Vitry ou la définition d’une sainteté féminine,” *OGE* 66 (1992): 46–69.

20. For the passive tone in James of Vitry’s depiction, see note 21; see also Mens, *Oorsprong*, 154.

21. *VMO*. Prologus, 7: 548.

22. Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Sarah Beckwith, *Christ’s Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 1996), 8–15.

23. *VIH*. XXIII, 68: 158: “sicut singula quaeque vidit, didicit, et cognovit, rapta in spiritu, tamquam mulier simplex indoctaque, et rerum huiusmodi ignara prorsus.”

24. *VIH*. XXII, 66: 158; XXXVI, 101: 164; XXIII, 71: 159. It is therefore one-sided when Cochemin, “Juette,” 410, states that “les dons de mystique de celle-ci constituent le thème central de son oeuvre.”

25. *VIH*. XXXVI, 101: 164; McNamara 109.

26. *VIH*. XII, 38: 153: “spiritum prophetiae”; XXIX, 87: 161: “discretionem haberet cogitationum, et intentionem cordis scientiam.”

27. *VIH*. XXII, 67: 158; cf. XLVI, 116: 167. See, for John of Huy, abbot of Floreffe, *Monasticon Belge* I, 1, 115–16; and Joseph and Victor Barbier, *Histoire de l’Abbaye de Floreffe de l’Ordre de Premontré*, 2 vols. (Namur: Wesmael-Charlier, 1892), I, 112–21.

28. Barbier, *Histoire de Floreffe*, 121. Later that year James was made cardinal and left for Rome.

29. Confessor: *VIH*. Prologus, 7: 146, and note 27; the “comes individua et unica” in Prologus, 7: 146, and XXI, 60: 157; the old nurse: XXXIII, 95: 163; Hugh’s own experiences as Yvette’s confessor: XXXIV, 96: 163.

30. Autbertus Miraeus, *Ordinis praemonstratensis Chronicon* (Cologne, 1631), 171–72, believed that Hugh was also the author of the Lives of Ida of Nivelles and Ida of Leeuw, both of which are included in his manuscript. Roisin, *L’Hagiographie cistercienne*, 148, among others, has shown this to be unlikely.

31. One example: *VIH*. X, 33: 152: “Denique ut humilis humilior fieret adhuc, (humilibus Deus dat gratiam) coram humilibus, id est, leprosis, et decumbentibus humiliare se voluit, cunctorum necessitatibus humiliter subserviens, ut semper eam humiliorem efficeret intus quotidiana servitus.” Hugh’s portrait thus displays characteristics that Roisin considered typical of Cistercian hagiography at the time—emphasis on humility, the absence of miracles, and a sharp eye for style and composition; see Simone Roisin, “Réflexions sur la culture intellectuelle en nos abbayes cisterciennes médiévales,” *Miscellanea historica*

in honorem Leonis van der Essen, 2 vols. (Brussels: Éditions Universitaires, 1947), I, 245–56. This, however, is only one side of the picture.

32. *VIH*. XI, 36: 152.

33. *VIH*. XXIII, 69–71: 159. I see no fear of rising heresy here as scholars tend to do.

34. Werner Williams-Krapp, “Literary Genre and Degrees of Saintliness: The Perception of Holiness in Writings by and About Female Mystics,” in *The Invention of Saintliness*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (London: Routledge, 2002), 272–91, here 278. Hugh once calls Yvette in her role as a lepers’ nurse “beatissima” and as a recluse regularly “sancta,” a living saint (in total 29 times). He makes no mention of a rising cult. A thirteenth-century saints’ calendar from Huy makes no mention of Yvette either; see Maurice Coens, “Les saints vénérés à Huy d’après un psautier récemment repatrié et le martyrologue de la collégiale,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 76 (1956): 324: “on lui [Yvette] donne habituellement le titre de bienheureux, voire celui de sainte, mais elle ne fut jamais honorée d’un culte proprement liturgique.” Not until Counter-Reformation times did she appear in saints’ calendars.

35. The *AASS* printed the text of Miraeus’s manuscript, the same as used by Henriquez; it has since been lost. It includes a *Praefatio*, a *Prologus* by Hugh, and the *Vita* itself. Because the *Praefatio* breathes an unmistakable Counter-Reformation spirit with its strong emphasis on self-castigation and individual spirituality, I am inclined to ascribe this to Miraeus rather than to Hugh and will leave it out of any further discussion. A second seventeenth-century manuscript, Trier MS 1179, contains the Lives of Lutgart of Tongeren, Elisabeth of Spalbeek, Christina the Astonishing, and Yvette; see *Analecta Bollandiana* 52 (1934): 241. A vernacular compilation is included in Petrus Ribaneira and Heribert Rosweydyus, *Generale Legende der Heylighen met het Leven Iesu Christi ende Marie* (Antwerp: Verdussen, 1649), 161–65.

36. Even her youngest son recognized this: *VIH*. XIX, 55: 156: “matrem, cujus sanctitatem noverat jam dudum.”

37. See David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985); and Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

38. *VIH*. II, 9–10: 147: “desiderio pristinae libertatis ejus animus permurtari non potuit.”

39. See notes 13, 23; according to *VIH*. XXXIV, 96: 163, she even knew the liturgy of mass and the order of the Eucharist celebration as if she were a priest; according to XXI, 59: 157, she taught her son the basics of the *sacrae litterae*.

40. *VIH*. XLII, 111: 165; XLIII, 112: 166; cf. IX, 30: 151, where Mary Magdalene is called “Apostolorum Apostola.” In 1226 a new altar in the leprosarium was consecrated to Mary Magdalene; see Barbier, *Histoire de Floreffe*, 112. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 87, mentions the learned women Catharina and Mary Magdalene as favorite patronesses of beguinages.

41. See my “Was Mary Magdalene a Magdalen?” in *Media Latinitas*, Festschrift L. J. Engels, ed. Renée I. A. Nip et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 269–74, and studies mentioned there.

42. Jan Goossens, *De kwestie Lambertus "li Bèges" (d. 1177)* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1984); but especially the balanced and divergent opinion of Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 24–32.

43. Beate Lundt, "Zur Entstehung der Universität als Männerwelt," in *Geschichte der Mädchen- und Frauenbildung*, ed. Elke Kleinau and Claudia Opitz, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1996), I, 103–18; see also Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 7, 80–85.

44. *Vita Idae* 1: ed. Chrysostomus Henriquez, *Quinque prudentes virgines* (Antwerp: Joannes Cnobbaert, 1630), 203.

45. *VMO*. XI, 93: 568; XII, 102: 570.

46. *VMY*. 5: 108, 112–13.

47. *VCM*. IV, 37–40: 657.

48. *Byen Boeck*, 45–46. In all its simplicity this exemplum is probably representative of the religious enthusiasm of women, rich and poor.

49. *VB*. I, 20–21: 24–26.

50. *Vita Idae Lewensis* I, 8–9: ed. AASS, 29 Octobris, LXI, 107–24, here 109–10. See Anton Steenwegen, "De gelukzalige Ida de Lewis of Ida van Gorsleeuw," *OGE* 57 (1983): 105–33, here 121–24.

51. *VIH*. II, 10: 147.

52. James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 343.

53. *VIH*. VI, 15–16: 148.

54. *VIH*. VIII, 20–24: 149–50.

55. Georges Duby, *Le chevalier, la femme et le prêtre: Le mariage dans la France féodale* (Paris: Hachette, 1981), and later studies.

56. *VIH*. IV, 12: 147.

57. *VIH*. VI, 15–16: 148. Vogel and Else, *Le pontifical*, I, 59–62, here 59: "Vidua autem quia soluta est a lege viri, se ipsam si vult Deo dare, debet et a presbitero velari, vel etiam consecratam ab episcopo velamen de altari accipere et ipsa sibi, non episcopus, illud debet imponere." An upgraded widow's blessing is not likely in view of her young age. See also Chapter 2.

58. *VIH*. XIV, 42: 153; XV, 45–47: 154; see below.

59. *VIH*. VII, 18–19: 148–49. For Odilia see *VO* and Chapter 5 (Eve).

60. At the time when she did this, circa 1180, the Church's ideas on usury had not yet filtered through to the general population; after she became a recluse and attacked the dean (after 1209), they were known. Apparently this boomeranged for her, which explains why Hugh needed eight chapters to defend her.

61. *VIH*. IX, 25–32: 150–52; quotation IX, 26: 150.

62. Heading of this section: *VIH*. IX, 32: 152; leprosy equated with purgatory: *VIH*. XXVIII, 86: 161. Cf. Isabelle Cochelin, "Bourgeoisie et léproseries de la principauté de Liège, fin xiiie- début xiiie siècles," *Sources, travaux historiques* 13 (1988): 15–18.

63. *VIH*. XI, 36: 152: "Vide, quaeso, feminam plusquam virum agentem."

64. Catherine J. Garrett, "Recovery from Anorexia Nervosa: A Durkheimian Interpretation," *Social Science and Medicine* 43 (1996): 1489–1506, here

1500, for a link with medieval asceticism from a medical point of view; see also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), with whose interpretation I strongly disagree.

65. *VIH*. XXI, 60–61: 157; the 30 pieces of silver are an allusion to the sum paid to Judas and used to purchase a potter's field for burying strangers: Matt. 27: 3–10.

66. *VIH*. XII, 38: 153; XIII, 39–41: 153.

67. *VIH*. XIV, 42: 153.

68. *VIH*. XIV, 43: 153.

69. *VIH*. XV, 46: 154: Maria “per manus illam assumens, manibus Filii repraesentat, qui osculo oris sui eam sibi reconcilians, reddidit eam matri suae, Mater, inquires, ecce filia tua: hanc tibi commendo, velut propriam, velut ancillam perpetuo peculiarem: hancque ut tuam custodi, protege, et gubernas”; quotation John 19: 27. Yvette therefore performed a *commendatio*, see Charles de Miramon, *Les “donnés” au Moyen Âge: Une forme de vie religieuse laïque, v. 1180 – v. 1500* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 124, note 1, who points out that in the leprosarium Yvette in fact lives the life of a “donnée,” but without any mention of the usual terminology. Her visionary “commendatio” does include ceremonial elements, which are summed up by Miramon, 24–25—kneeling before the prelate, question and answer, “immixtio manuum”—but without the formula of autotraditio.

70. *VIH*. XVII–XVIII, 49–52: 155.

71. *VIH*. V, 14: 148.

72. *VIH*. XI, 37: 152: “disciplinis instituerentur”; XXI, 60: 157: “Disciplina quoque in diebus ejus admodum invaluit in loco, adeo quod regulariter et secundum ordinem viverent omnes tam leprosi quam incolumes, seorsum viri per se, et seorsum feminae, communi cibo potuque et vestibus contenti omnes, secundum institutionem a Patris editam.”

73. Luc Verheijen, *La Règle de Saint Augustin*, 2 vols. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1967), with a description of the *Praeceptum* in II, 87–97, and edition in I, 417–37. Quotation *Praeceptum* III, 1: 421 in *VIH*. XVIII, 50: 155: “Carnem vestram domate ieiuniis et abstinentia escae [cibi in *VIH*] et potus, quantum valetudo permittit.” About the leader: *Praeceptum* VII: 435–36.

74. The Liège canon Conrad, who had risen to the office of abbot of Citeaux, cardinal of Porto, and legate, issued a decree “contra . . . insidiatores pudicitie sanctarum virginum;” included in *Chronica Villariensis Monasterii*, in *MGH SS* 25, 198.

75. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 403–4.

76. *DM*. VI, 35: 387–88.

77. This is also an important conclusion of Simons, in *Cities of Ladies*.

78. *VIH*. XXXIII, 95: 163; the author goes back in time here.

79. Secondary literature (the studies of Doerr, Clay, Gougau, Warren) has summed up a whole series of enclosure rituals. As far as I can determine, these are not liturgical formulas for ordination in a clerical order (that of deacon, for example) or the monastic status, as is usually assumed, but “follow-up

blessings” for “honors-class” monks setting out to lead a solitary life. This also applies to the ritual published by Edmond Martène, *De Antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus Libri Quatuor*, 4 vols. (Rouen: Guillelmus Behourt, 1706), II, iii, 93–96, from MS Paris, BN lat. 8898, fols. 209–210v. The text comes from an “ordinarius et processionalis” from Soissons, of which the relevant quires, fols. 109–213, must have been written shortly after 1205; see *Catalogue général des manuscrits latins, nos. 8823–8921*, ed. Jacqueline Sclafer and Marie-Pierre Laffitte (Paris: Bibliothèque National, 1997), 122–24. This is the only enclosure ritual from my research area and period that I know of. No ritual is included in the complete pontifical from Sens, BN lat. 934 (twelfth–thirteenth centuries), for example.

However, the formula in the Soissons codex is not found in the category “ordo de sacris ordinibus,” the ordination/consecration of persons, in other words, but with the ceremonial instructions for special occasions, such as the visit of the king or a new pope. It is a paraliturgical blessing for a monk (with male endings), which was subsequently adjusted for women (interlinear female endings). Later, therefore, it must have been used for female recluses, most of whom were probably laywomen. It shows all the characteristics of a performative ritual and has several elements in common with the—similarly paraliturgical—burial ritual. The “Church burial,” it should be noted, was developed to fill the lacuna that came about after the introduction of the sacrament of the dying, to satisfy the family’s wish to give the deceased a solemn burial. The solemn enclosure of the recluse came about for similar reasons.

Late medieval descriptions of enclosures, again recorded in nonliturgical books, presuppose lay recluses either following “the rule for recluses” or making their profession at the same time and following, for example, the (Third) Rule of Augustine; see the “modus ordinandi inclusam” preserved with the *Punten van Sinte Gregorius (Rules of St. Gregory)*, published in Ludovicus H. C. Schutjes, *Geschiedenis van het Bisdom’s Hertogenbosch* (Sint-Michielsgestel: n.p., 1870), 373–78; and in slightly different versions by Floris Prims, “Kluizen, kluizenaars en kluizenaresses in Brabant,” *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis* (n.d.); and the *Analecta Gijsberti Coeverincx*, ed. Van den Elsen and Hoevenaars, II, 64–77; as well as the formula of Busch (note 81 below). L’Hermite-Leclercq, “La femme, la recluse et la mort,” 151–62, makes no distinction between lay recluses and honors-class monastics.

80. In the *Rules of St. Gregory* of the *Analecta Gijsberti Coeverincx*, II, 65, we read: “Thus out of divine grace and with papal powers he [Pope Gregory] grants them remission of all sins, so that they, after their death, will never suffer purgatory.”

81. Luke 1: 68–78; Johannes Busch, “*Chronicon Windeshemense*” und “*Liber de reformatione monasteriorum*,” ed. Karl Grube (Halle: Otto Hendel, 1886), 655–59, recorded an enclosure ritual that he had conducted himself. The formula for the last part of it, the actual enclosure, with its precise list of readings from the Bible and prayers, closely follows the burial ceremony in the *Missale Romanum*, including the prophecy of Zacharias, “Benedictus dominus deus Israel,” 658.

82. *VIH*. XXXIII, 95: 163; XXXIV, 96: 163; XLVI, 116: 167. A fifteenth-century recluse from Delft, very devout and very much enclosed, left her anchorhold

at night to crawl on hands and knees around the church. Her confessor had a key with which he could enter her cell to hear her confession. At times he found her in rapture and quietly left the anchorhold. These anecdotes demonstrate the great piety of the anchoress: there is no question of any suspected laxness of enclosure; see D. P. Oosterbaan, "Kroniek van de Nieuwe Kerk te Delft," *Haarlemse Bijdragen* 65 (1958): 3–304, here 197–98.

83. *VJ*, I, 28: 78–80.

84. According to a more or less contemporary source, it was in Eberhardtsklausen, now a pilgrimage place for Mary, that a simple fifteenth-century farm laborer found a small sculpture of Mary, underwent a conversion, and built himself a hermitage. His cell grew into a Windesheim monastery, to which a *recluserium* was added. We do not know if this *recluserium* goes back to the original hermitage or the extent to which the original architecture has been retained in its present, restored form. However, in view of the striking similarities with the written information about *reclusoria* in my *Vitae*, this structure gives a possible picture of medieval anchorholds. See Petrus Dahms, ed., *Klausener Pilgerbuch* (Trier: Paulinus, 2001), 129.

85. Utrechts Archief, bisschoppelijk archief, Reg. 10. fol. 40. Cf. Warren, *Anchorites*, 60, where the bishop of Norwich ordered around 1250 that confessors "shall not speak with them within the enclosures of their houses, but shall seek them out only at their windows that turn to the church"; cf. 32, 33, 64, 78.

86. *Ordonnantien ende regulen*, preserved in the anchorhold of Vught and published by Van Dijck, "Kluizenaresen," 16–18, here 16.

87. *VJ*, II, 38: 230. The Coeverinx version of the *Rules of Gregory* does prescribe a black curtain; see *Analecta*, II, 68.

88. John J. Conley, "The Eremitical Anthropology of William of St-Thierry," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 25 (1990): 115–30, here 130, 128; as opposed to Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism from Gregory the Great to the Twelfth Century*, vol. II of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 228, who characterizes the letter as "a perfect guide to monastic spirituality, as balanced as it is profound"; cf. Michaela Pfeifer, "Wilhelms von Saint-Thierry *Goldener Brief* und seine Bedeutung für die Zisterzienser," *Analecta Cisterciensia* 50 (1994): 3–250; 51 (1995): 3–109. All three authors use "eremitism" and "monasticism" in the sense of the Church Fathers; see Chapter 7.

89. William of St. Thierry, *Lettre* 31: 168–70.

90. See, for Yvette's action against the dean, my "Ivetta of Huy," 240–41.

91. Especially *VIH*, XL, 105–6: 164–65.

92. *VIH*, XLI, 107: 165: "internis coelestium secretorum consiliis tam frequenter admissa, mediatrix quodammodo haberetur ad correctionem multorum, inter caelestia et terrestia, visibilia et invisibilia, inter Deum et homines"; McNamara 112.

93. *VIH*, XXII, 66: 158; XXXIV, 96: 163: "Missam totam, non modo interesse sed et coadesse ita mulieri concessum est." Peter Dinzelsbacher, "Rollenverweigerung, religiöser Aufbruch und mystisches Erleben mittelalterlicher Frauen," in *Religiöse Frauenbewegung und mystische Frömmigkeit im Mittelalter*,

ed. idem and Dieter Bauer (Cologne & Vienna: Böhlau, 1988), 1–58, here 43–44, refers to visions of Mechthild of Magdeburg, who saw herself as co-celebrant, and Ida of Louvain, who celebrated the Eucharist clothed in paraments.

94. *VIIH*. XX, 58: 157: “Sumebant autem panem pariter cum gratiarum actione et laetitia spiritus.”

95. Bärbel Stocker, “Die Opfergeräte der heiligen Wiborada von St. Gallen—Eine Frau als Zelebrantin der Eucharistie?” *Freiburger Diözesan-Archiv* 11 (1991): 405–19, here 407, 416: Wiborada’s *Vita* mentions a “calicem et patenam uel corporale, sed et fanonem cum quo solita es [Wiborada] offerre.” This sounds as if she celebrated mass herself, but it probably means “Kommunion-feier extra missam.”

96. See Damien Vorreux, *Sainte Claire d’Asise: Documents* (Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, 1983), 251, who quotes the letter from Gregory IX; and Charles M. A. Caspers, “The Role of the People in the Liturgy According to the Synodal Statutes of the Ancient Dioceses of Cambrai,” in ‘*Omnes Circumstantes*’: *Contributions Towards a History of the Role of the People in the Liturgy*, ed. idem and M. Schneiders (Kampen: Kok, 1990), 155–76, here 167: “contrarium [to the general rules] communiter fit in hospitali Herentalensi et in beginagio ibidem, ubi communiter vel hospitalisse vel beghine ministrant altari.” For the earlier history of the deaconess, see Chapters 1 and 2.

97. See also the examples cited by Leclercq, in “Eucharistic Celebrations.”

98. Greta Noordenbos, *Onbegrensde Lijnen: Een onderzoek naar culturele en sexespecifieke factoren in de ontwikkeling van Anorexia Nervosa* (Leiden: DWSO Press, 1988), 22–24.

99. When describing Yvette in the anchorhold, Hugh often uses male imagery, metaphors of battle and victory, to describe her new status. Roisin, *L’hagiographie cisterciennne*, 162, points out the paradisiacal freedom of the spiritual person: “Cet état, proche du retour à l’innocence primitive, est censé rendre à l’homme ses privilèges originaux et notemment son souverain domaine sur les créatures sans raison.”

100. Using Brian Stock’s concept of the “textual community” explicated in *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 90–92, Moore, “Heresy, Repression, and Social Change,” 36–37, speaks of groups, even of illiterate persons, that formed around a literate master, thus lending its members a group identity: “mediated literacy [is] a new principle of association.” Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik II: Frauenmystik und Franziskanische Mystik der Frühzeit* (Munich: Beck, 1993), 117, refers to a similar community around Christina of Stommeln in the Rhineland.

Chapter 4

1. The most important source on Juliana (1192–1258) is the *Vita*, written just a few years after her death (1261–63); BHL 4521. Edition: in *AASS*, 7 Aprilis, X, 437–75, based on fifteenth-century MSS but with the omission of a few risqué

details. A new, complete edition is based on MS Paris, Arsenal 945, from ca. 1280, with a French translation by Jean-Pierre Delville, *Fête-Dieu (1246–1996) II: Vie de Sainte Julienne de Cornillon* (Louvain-La-Neuve & Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); here referred to as *VJ*. English translation by Barbara Newman, *The Life of Juliana of Mont-Cornillon* (Toronto: Peregrina Publications, 1988). See Jean-Pierre Delville, “Julienne de Cornillon à la lumière de son biographe,” in *Fête-Dieu (1246–1996) I: Actes du colloque de Liège, 12–14 septembre 1996*, ed. André Haquin (Louvain-La-Neuve & Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 27–53; Jean Cottiaux, *Sainte Julienne de Cornillon, promotrice de la Fête-Dieu: Son pays, son temps, son message* (Liège: Carmel de Cornillon, 1991); and the more historical study by Émile Denis, *Sainte Julienne et Cornillon: Étude historique* (Liège: Printing Co, 1927).

2. *VJ*, I, 3: 16; I, 6: 22. Cf. II, 1: 108, where: “etatis et sexus oblita cucurrit”; see note 28.

3. *VJ*, II, 20: 174.

4. Studies of Eve are mentioned in Chapter 5, note 1. Of importance here: Cyrille Lambot, “La bulle d’Urbain IV à Ève de Saint-Martin sur l’institution de la Fête-Dieu,” *Scriptorium* 2 (1948): 67–77, here 76; repr. in the *In Memoriam* volume for Lambot in *RB* 79 (1969).

5. Since the inventories by Margot King, nearly all studies of the “Holy Women of Liège” use the limited group of about twelve that she selected; see her “The Desert Mothers Revisited: The Mothers of the Diocese of Liège,” *Vox Benedictina* 5 (1988): 325–54.

6. See, e.g., Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*.

7. Cyrille Lambot and I. Fransen, *L’office de la Fête-Dieu primitive: Textes et mélodies retrouvés* (Maredsous: Éditions de Maredsous, 1946); Cyrille Lambot, “L’office de la Fête-Dieu: Aperçus nouveaux sur ses origines,” *RB* 54 (1942): 61–123; Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 169–76, 189. Rubin incorrectly attributes the office *Animarum cibus* to Canon John of Lausanne and gives it no further attention. Cf. F. Baix, “La première célébration de la Fête-Dieu à Fosses en 1246,” *Annales de la Société archéologique de Namur* 44 [1943/44] (1947): 157–78.

8. Cyrille Lambot, “Eve de Saint-Martin et les premiers historiens liégeois de la Fête-Dieu,” *Studia Eucharistica (1246–1946)* (Antwerp: Nederl. Boekhandel, 1946), 10–36; repr. *RB* 79; see also Chapter 5.

9. D. Papenbrochius, *Appendix de officio venerabilis Sacramenti*, in *AASS*, 7 Aprilis, X, 893–96.

10. Bartholomeus Fisen, *Origo prima festi Corporis Christi ex viso sanctae virginis Iulianae divinitus oblato* (Liège: Ioannis Ouwerx, 1628), 218, 231; see below on Eve’s writings.

11. Cyrille Lambot, “Un précieux manuscrit de la *Vie de S. Julienne de Mont-Cornillon*,” in *Miscellanea historica in honorem A. de Meyer*, 2 vols. (Louvain: Bibliothèque de l’Université, 1946), I, 602–12; repr. *RB* 79; cf. Émile Brouette, “Un manuscrit de la Vie de S. Julienne de Cornillon écrit à Valduc,” *Leodium* 47 (1960): 1–13.

12. See the excellent volume by Catherine M. Mooney, ed., *Gendered*

Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Anne L. Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau: A Twelfth-Century Visionary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), on Elisabeth of Schönau and her brother Ekbert; and the impressive recent series of studies on Hildegard of Bingen. Recently Margery Kempe, Birgitta of Sweden, and others have also gained entrance to the guild of medieval authors.

13. John Coakley, "Friars as Confidants of Holy Women in Medieval Dominican Hagiography," in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 222–46; idem, "Gender and the Authority of Friars: The Significance of Holy Women for Thirteenth-Century Franciscans and Dominicans," *Church History* 60 (1991): 445–460; and Aviad M. Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). For an innovative view, see Christine Ruhrberg, *Der literarische Körper der Heiligen: Leben und Viten der Christina von Stommeln, 1242–1312* (Tübingen & Basel: Francke, 1995).

14. Gregory IX wrote to Clare: "You are our consolation among the innumerable, bitter, and endless trials by which we are constantly being afflicted. . . . We ask you to remember us always in your prayers by raising your pious hands in incessant supplication to God Who knows that surrounded as we are by so many dangers we can not prevail because of human frailty" in Regis J. Armstrong, trans., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), 103–4. Cf. Marco Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, trans. Brian Purfield (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1993).

15. Paul Alphandéry, "Profètes et ministère prophétique dans le Moyen Âge latin," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 12 (1932): 334–59, here 335: "un moyen d'éducation et instrument de persuasion."

16. *VJ*. I, Prologue: 4–6; see also Chapter 5 (Eve).

17. *VJ*. I, Prologue: 6.

18. Delville in the introduction to *VJ*.; Cornillon: *VJ*. II, 1: 106–8. A possible candidate, in my view, is Geoffrey of Fontaines. Himself from the area of Liège, he went to study in Paris around 1270 and became one of the prominent theologians there. At his death (ca. 1300 or shortly thereafter) he left many manuscripts to the Sorbonne and to St. Martin. The earliest one, Paris, BN lat. 16297, dating from his first years in Paris and partly written in his own hand, contains, besides school texts, a tract with the latest insights into eucharistic theology, a short summary of the reasons why the Feast of Corpus Christi should be introduced, and a compendium of papal decrees for the Church administration in Liège—precisely the sort of topics that would have interested the author of the *Vita* after he was posted at the University of Paris. Geoffrey propagates a form of incarnation theology with the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and even a rejection of the daily sacrifice of the priest (fols. 237ra–237vb), a position that Juliana would certainly have affirmed. According to Glorieux, Geoffrey must have compiled the manuscript in the years 1270–72, which would have been approximately eight years after the writing of the *Vita*; see Palémon Glorieux, "Un recueil scolaire de Godefroid de Fontaines," *RTAM* 3 (1931): 37–53;

and Christine Renardy, *Les maîtres universitaires du diocèse de Liège: Répertoire biographique* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1981), 257–60, no. 238. This Geoffrey would then have had a career comparable to that of Thomas of Cantimpré, who also started out working in Brabant-Liège, wrote a few saints' Lives while he was there, and subsequently went to study in Paris.

19. In *VJ*. I, Prologue, the hagiographer uses the catchwords *sanctitas*, *puritas*, and *caritas* (*iustitie zelum* comes in Book II) to fashion Juliana into a perfect saint, a virgin who exercised self-control in body and spirit, exhausted herself in humility and the practice of virtue, and served her fellow human beings with self-sacrificing love. In *VJ*. II, 2: 108–12, he summarizes this once again: Juliana was an *agna immaculata* like Agnes. He then describes the *tribulationes et persecutiones* (II, 1: 106) that Juliana experienced as a consequence of her unfailing *iustitie zelum*, sufferings that marked her as an imitator of Christ and a virgin martyr. It is in this context that he describes her visions and struggle to institute the Feast of Corpus Christi, her failure in Cornillon, and her "exile" in Namur and Fosses. At the end (II, 46: 246) he concludes: "martyrem te dixisse . . . que martyrium quod illi habuerunt in opere tu habuisti in voluntate." In none of these passages is Eve cited as a source. See Vauchez, *La sainteté en occident*, 254.

20. *VJ*. II, 45: 240–42.

21. H. Schuermans, "Les reliques de la bienheureuse Juliana de Cornillon à l'abbaye de Villers," *Annales de la société archéologique de l'arrondissement de Nivelles* 7 (1903): 1–68.

22. Denis, *Sainte Julienne*, 49.

23. Françoise Lecomte, *Inventaire des archives de l'Hôpital de Cornillon à Liège* (Archives de l'État à Liège; Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1984); Robert Hankart, "L'Hospice de Cornillon à Liège," *Vie Wallonne* 40 (1966): 5–49, 93–134; Pierre de Spiegeler, "La léproserie de Cornillon et la cité de Liège (xii^e–xv^e s.)," *Annales de la société belge d'histoire des hôpitaux* 18 (1980): 5–16; idem, *Les hôpitaux et l'assistance à Liège (xii^e–xv^e s.): Aspects institutionnels et sociaux* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1987). Cf. François-Olivier Touati, "Les groupes de laïcs dans les hôpitaux et les léproseries au Moyen-Âge," in *Les mouvances laïques des ordres religieux* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 1996), 137–62.

24. Young children: *VJ*. II, 2: 108. Knightly family from Loon: Denis, *Sainte Julienne*, 160. At the time, then, there were ties between Cornillon and the counts of Loon, one more piece of evidence for my hypothesis about Juliana's family background.

25. Jean-Louis Kupper, "La cité de Liège au temps de Julienne de Cornillon," in *Fête-Dieu*, ed. Haquin, 19–27, here 26.

26. *VJ*. I, 11: 32; later John of Lausanne and Eve had a "novam orationis cellulam" built, II, 25: 186; on a healthy spot, II, 28: 200: was this a kind of anchorhold?

27. *VJ*. I, 5: 18; Cottiaux, *Sainte Julienne*, 38.

28. *VJ*. I, 7: 24. The hagiographer presents Juliana's erudition not as academic, human learning but as inspired, divine wisdom. When he, nevertheless,

speaks of her great human knowledge, we have to interpret this as hard facts. More on the *unctione magistra* in Chapter 5 (Eve).

29. *VJ*. I, 7–8: 24–26.

30. *VB*. I, 20–21: 24–26; cf. I, 49–53: 58–66. In Chapter 3 (Yvette) I have given a summary of other women who enjoyed a solid education.

31. Steenwegen, “De gelukzalige Ida,” 122–23, shows that Liège chapters, in addition to their internal school for boys, regularly had external schools for boys and girls. The chapter of St. Lambert even employed four clerics for the education of the faithful.

32. *VJ*. I, 22–23: 66–70; I, 26: 74–76; I, 28–30: 78–82; II, 20: 174–76; see also Chapter 5 (Eve).

33. Alain Marchandisse, *La fonction épiscopale à Liège aux xiii^e et xiv^e siècles: Étude de politologie historique* (Geneva: Droz, 1998), 140.

34. *VJ*. II, 5: 120. When the hagiographer describes Juliana’s communion, he uses words reminiscent of her office; see I, 12: 34: “in edulio sacri corporis . . . manna plente . . . panem vivum, qui de celo descendit”; cf. Lambot-Fransen, *L’Office*, e.g. *I Vesperis*, Antiphon, and *I Nocturno*, responsorium.

35. *VJ*. II, 6: 120–24, here 120: quotation in note 75.

36. Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 39, 55; *DM*. IX, 33: II, 189–91, about Uda or Oda of Thorembais, who later became a recluse; *VMO*. VII, 72: 563; IX, 86: 566: Mary of Oignies saw a beautiful young boy in the host as it was raised. *Chronica Villariensis Monasterii*: ed. G. Waitz, in *MGH SS* 22, 205: about the “mulier religiosa Diedela” who saw the child in the host.

37. *VJ*. II, 6: 122; quotation in note 75.

38. *VJ*. II, 6: 122, 124.

39. See Agnes Steinmetz, “Die tönende Posaune Gottes: Hildegard von Bingen als Schöpferin liturgischer Gesänge,” in *Liturgie und Frauenfrage: Ein Beitrag zur Frauenforschung aus liturgiewissenschaftlicher Sicht*, ed. Teresa Berger and Albert Gerhards (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 1990), 127–53. Mary of Oignies also “sang” theology at the end of her life; see Carolyn Muessig, “Prophecy and Song: Teaching and Preaching by Medieval Women,” in *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 146–58. The contribution of women to liturgy in general deserves further study.

40. Ps. 39: 4/ 40: 3. *VMO*. XII, 106: 571: “de cantu novae solemnitis.”

41. *VJ*. II, 7: 124.

42. Cottiaux, *Sainte Julienne*, 183.

43. Marie-Dominique Chapotin, *Histoire des Dominicains de la Province de France: Le siècle des fondations* (Paris & Rouen, 1898), 129–30. Texts in Paul Frédéricq, *Corpus Inquisitionis haereticarum pravitatis Neerlandicae*, 2 vols. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1889), I, 74–75, 88; also for subsequent references.

44. For Hugh, see *DS*. VII, 221–239; and Johannes H. H. Sassen, *Hugo von St. Cher: Seine Tätigkeit als Kardinal, 1244–1263* (Bonn: Haustein, 1908).

45. Martinus Cawley, trans., *Send Me God: The Lives of Ida the Compassionate of Nivelles, Nun of La Ramée, Arnulf, Lay Brother of Villers, and Abundus, Monk of Villers, by Goswin of Bossut* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 183.

46. G. G. Meersseman, "Les débuts de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs dans le comté de Flandre (1224–1280)," *AFP* 17 (1947): 5–40, here 28, points out, for example, the early involvement of Hugh in the marriage of countess Johanna of Flanders; idem, "Les Frères Prêcheurs et le mouvement dévôt en Flandre au xiii^e siècle," *AFP* 19 (1949): 69–130, here 71, where the Dominican Zegher, confessor of Margaret of Ypres in the 1230s, comes up for discussion.

47. Louis-J. Bataillon and Nicole Bériou, "G. de Mailly, de l'ordre des Frères Prêcheurs," *AFP* 61 (1991): 6–88, here 22, state: "On peut . . . bien admettre qu'il [Gerardus] s'est servi des Postilles composées sous la direction d'Hughes à Saint-Jacques dans les années 1230–1240, pour enseigner la théologie au studium de Liège, pour écrire un traité comme le *De doctrina cordis*, et pour rédiger ses sermons."

48. Simon Tugwell, "The Evolution of Dominican Structures of Government II: The First Dominican Provinces," *AFP* 70 (2000): 5–109, here 76. Hugh is attested as provincial on 7 March 1236, which makes it probable that he was elected at the chapter of 1235 (37). In correspondence Father Tugwell confirmed that this was all the information known to him. I am grateful for his help.

49. *VJ*, II, 6: 128: "fratri hugoni tunc priori provinciali ordinis fratrum predicatorum."

50. See the biography by Nikolaus Wicki, *Philippi Cancellarii Parisiensis Summa de bono*, 2 vols. (Bern: Francke, 1985), I, 16*–28*, who considers him one of the better poets of the thirteenth century, with works including "nombreuses pièces liturgiques" (24*); and Peter Dronke, "The Lyrical Compositions of Philip the Chancellor," *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser. 28 (1987): 563–92, who also makes a special point of Philip's poetic qualities and hymns. This Philip had connections in the Low Countries.

51. I discuss Hugh's general politics in Liège in the Epilogue. As cardinal, therefore in 1244–46, he wrote a letter to the bishop of Liège telling him that he should accept the feast (*VJ*, II, 10: 144). As legate in 1251 he himself celebrated a demonstrative Corpus Christi mass in the Church of St. Martin and in 1252 proclaimed the feast for all areas under his jurisdiction; see Bormans and Schoolmeesters, eds., *Cartulaire*, II, 32–34. From other documentary evidence we know that he gave protection to threatened women's convents, among them Salzinnes, where Juliana lived.

52. Petrus C. Boeren, *La vie et les oeuvres de Guiard de Laon, 1170 env. – 1248* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1956). Guiard was archdeacon of Laon from 1215 to 1221, when Jacques Pantaleon arrived there: these men therefore knew each other as well. Later we will also see that Guiard had in his possession Juliana's prayers and introduced the feast in Cambrai long before 1264; see Susanne Martinet, *Montlloon: Reflet fidèle de la montagne et des environs de Laon de 1100 à 1300* (Laon: Courrier de l'Aisne, 1972), 123.

53. *VJ*, II, 7: 128–30.

54. *VJ*, II, 9: 136–40, here 136; the following passage also refers to this caput.

55. *VJ*, II, 9: ed. AASS: 459D. J-P. Delville, "Jean de Cornillon," *DHGE* XXXV, 308–9, opts for the middle road and calls John the "editor" of the text.

56. *Terminus ante quem* is 1242, when clerk John became prior.

57. *VJ*. II, 9: 140.
58. Marchandise, *Fonction épiscopale*, 140–42.
59. *VJ*. II, 11, 12: 146–50.
60. Delville included the text in his edition, 150–52, note 728.
61. See charter of 1247 in Bormans and Schoolmeesters, *Cartulaire I*, 530–31, no. 436.
62. The intervening history 1247–64 will be dealt with in Chapter 5 on Eve, since she is then the central figure.
63. Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period: A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament According to the Theologians, c. 1080–1220* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984); Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist: The Origin of the Rite and the Development of Its Interpretation* (English trans. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999); Nathan Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy: The Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1990). See also the various studies in Haquin, ed., *Fête-Dieu*; and Gary Macy, “A Re-evaluation of the Contribution of Thomas Aquinas to the Thirteenth-Century Theology of the Eucharist,” in *The Intellectual Climate of the Early University*, Festschrift Otto Gründler, ed. Nancy Van Deusen (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 53–72.
64. A. Ampe, “Een oud *Florilegium eucharisticum* in een veertiende-eeuws handschrift,” *OGE* 31 (1957): 301–24; 32 (1958): 56–75; 38 (1964): 23–55; see also the manuscript Brussels KB 8609–20, in which tracts by Guiard as well as the *Vita* of Lame Margaret and other Lives of religious women are preserved, in Chapter 6 (Margaret the Lame).
65. Macy, *Theologies of the Eucharist*, 86.
66. James W. Kinn, *The Pre-eminence of the Eucharist Among the Sacraments According to Alexander of Hales, St. Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, and St. Thomas Aquinas* (Mundelein, Ill.: Saint Mary, 1960); see below.
67. What has received considerable attention is the historical role of women prophets in the Middle Ages; see the classic study by Paul Alphandéry, “Prophètes et ministère prophétique”; Anne Clark Bartlett, “Commentary, Polemic, and Prophecy in Hildegard of Bingen’s *Solutiones triginta octo Quaestionum*,” *Viator* 23 (1992): 153–65; Vauchez, *Saints, prophètes et visionnaires*; also “Les textes prophétiques et la prophétie en Occident,” an issue of *MEFRMA* 102 (1990). Rosalynn Voaden, *God’s Words, Women’s Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (York: York Medieval Press/ Boydell & Brewer, 1999), deals with the theological reflections on the concept of prophecy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
68. Lombard did deal with the question in his commentary on the Psalms, ed. *PL* 191, 55–62. Other scholastics, too, were developing their own view on the matter; see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Théorie de la prophétie et philosophie de la connaissance aux environs de 1230: La contribution d’Hugues de Saint-Cher* (Ms Douai 434, *Question* 481), critical edition introduction and commentary (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovanense, 1977), 147, but it was not yet a general issue.
69. Jean-Pierre Torrell, “Hugues de Saint-Cher et Thomas d’Aquin: Contribution à l’histoire du Traité de la prophétie,” *Revue Thomiste* 74 (1974): 5–22;

and especially idem, *Théorie de la prophétie*, with edition of the *De Prophetia* and extensive commentary, from which I have drawn a great deal of information for the following section. See also Palémon Glorieux, “Les 572 Questiones du manuscrit de Douai 434,” *RTAM* 10 (1938): 123–52, 225–67.

70. *De Prophetia* II, ad 5: ed. Torrell 30; commentary Torrell, *Théorie*, 160.

71. *De Prophetia* II, ad 2: 29; commentary 209.

72. Torrell, “Hugues de Saint-Cher,” 16.

73. *De Prophetia* I, solutio: 10–11.

74. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (d. 203) to Marguerite Porete (d. 1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), with edition, 250–56, and trans. 168–69: “percipio . . . in anima mea, apertis exterioribus oculis, ita ut numquam in eis defectum extasis paciar, sed vigilanter die ac nocte illa video.”

75. *VJ*, II, 6: 120–22: “A tempore iuventutis . . . apparebat . . . ei luna in suo splendore, cum aliquantula tamen sui sperici corporis fractione . . .” Subsequently: “contulit igitur se . . . deprecandum dominum, quatinus si id quod videbat aliquid significabat.” She then receives the interpretation. Finally: “iniunxit [Christus] eidem [Juliana] ut hanc sollempnitatem ipsa inchoaret et eam debere fieri mundo primitus nuntiaret.” Compare also the successive stages in the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich.

76. *De Prophetia* I, 7: 5.

77. Rupert of Deutz, *Rupertus Tutiensis, In Apocalypsim Joannis apostoli commentarium*: ed. PL 169, 831: “Sane verba prophetiae hujus cum dicit, omnimodam prophetiam hic intelligere vel expectare debemus, id est, trium temporum, preteriti, presentis et futuri.” On Rupert, see Chapter 7.

78. *DM*, VIII, 2–4: II, 83.

79. *VJ*, I, 21: 62–64. Bernard McGinn, “The Abyss of Love,” in *The Joy of Learning and the Love of God*, Festschrift Jean Leclercq, ed. E. Rosanna Elder (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 95–120, here 96, therefore concludes: “Especially when women, who *ex professo* could not be masters of the sacred text (that is, trained expositors of Scripture) began to produce significant mystical literature, the boundaries between the Spirit’s biblical and personal revelations . . . took on new configurations.”

80. Torrell, “Hugues de Saint-Cher”; Alcuin Blamires, “Women and Preaching in Medieval Orthodoxy, Heresy, and Saints’ Lives,” *Viator* 26 (1995): 135–52; idem, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

81. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2a 2ae: 177.2: ed and trans. Roland Potter, *Thomas Aquinas, Prophecy and Other Charisms (2a 2ae: 171–8)* (London: Blackfriars, Eyre & Spottiswoode, New York: McGraw & Hill Book, 1970), 132–35: “sermone potest aliquis uti dupliciter. Uno modo private ad unum vel paucos, familiariter colloquendo. Et quantum ad hoc, gratia sermonis potest competere mulieribus. — Alio modo publice alloquendo totam Ecclesiam. Et hoc mulieri non conceditur.” See also Blamires, “Women and Preaching,” 146.

82. Jean Leclercq, “Le magistère du prédicateur au xiii^e siècle,” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 21 (1946): 105–47, here 119–20 with edition: “mulieres sanctae . . . etsi missae non erant ab homine sicut a praelato

potestatem habente, tamen instinctu Spiritus Sancti et missae a Spiritu Sancto praedicaverunt . . . quod auctoritatem habuerunt a Spiritu Sancto.” See also Blamires, “Women and Preaching.” Nicole Bériou, “The Right of Women to Give Religious Instruction in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Women Preachers and Prophets*, ed. Kienzle and Walker, 134–45, concludes on 139: “a certain right to speak authoritatively might be recognized for women who had the special gift of prophecy.” This is exactly what Eve will argue: see Chapter 5. Cf. also Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 124–32.

83. Miramon, *Les “donnés” au Moyen Âge*.

84. Palémon Glorieux, ed., *La “Summa Duacensis” (Douai 434)* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1955), 135: “Revelatio est rerum cognitio a Spiritu Sancto subito facta; prophetia est rerum cognitio a Deo paulatim facta et absque industria; scientia est cognitio humano studio et proprio acquisita; doctrina est cognitio docente et ministrante alio assecuta.”

85. Voaden, *God’s Words, Women’s Voices*, 45; Deborah A. Fraioli, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000); Dyan Elliott, “Seeing Double: John Gerson, the Discernment of Spirits, and Joan of Arc,” *American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 26–54.

86. Beryl Smalley, “The Gospels in the Schools: Peter the Chanter, Hugh of St. Cher, Alexander of Hales, John of La Rochelle,” in idem, *The Gospels in the Schools, 1100–1280* (London: Hambledon, 1985), 96–196, here 138, concludes: “Contemplation, study, preaching and pastoral care: the Friar . . . devoted [himself] to these activities as an integrated whole.”

87. Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 170, note 44; Chiara Frugoni, “Female Mystics, Visions, and Iconography,” in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 130–64, here 131, also speaks of “mental images” such as metaphors that become visions.

88. Charles M. A. Caspers, *Eucharistische vroomheid en het feest van Sacramentsdag in de Nederlanden tijdens de late Middeleeuwen* (Louvain: Peeters, 1992); and Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 10. Her aim is to investigate how “this symbolic system was disseminated” and “entered the context . . . of religious lay women” and others, from where “it emerged in the form of a new eucharistic feast.”

89. *AASS*, 7 Aprilis, X, 893–96.

90. See, for the textual history, Lambot and Fransen, *L’Office*, 11–37. Lambot had made earlier attempts to reconstruct the old office in Lambot, “L’office de la Fête-Dieu.” The antiphonary from Tongeren is bound into MS KB The Hague 70 E 4; it has musical notation.

91. Pierre-Marie Gy, “La papauté et le droit liturgique aux xii^e et xiii^e siècles,” in *The Religious Roles of the Papacy: Ideals and Realities, 1150–1300*, ed. Christopher Ryan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1989), 229–45, here 236.

92. BN Paris, MS lat. 755. See Pierre-Marie Gy, “L’Office du Corpus Christi et S. Thomas d’Aquin: état d’une recherche,” *RSPT* 64 (1980): 491–507; idem, “L’Office du Corpus Christi, oeuvre de S. Thomas d’Aquin” (1985), repr. in idem, *La liturgie dans l’histoire* (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 223–45; idem, “Office liégeois et office romain de la Fête-Dieu,” in *Fête-Dieu*, ed. Haquin, 117–26.

93. Jean Cottiaux, "L'office liégeois de la Fête-Dieu, sa valeur et son destin," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 58 (1963): 5–81; 405–59, and his biography *Sainte Julienne*, esp. 169–77.

94. Tom Elich, "Using Liturgical Texts in the Middle Ages," in *Fountain of Life*, ed. Gérard Austin (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1991), 69–83, here 70–71.

95. We cannot even be absolutely sure that Thomas is the author. However, since Ronald J. Zawilla in an unpublished dissertation, "The *Historiae Corporis Christi* Attributed to Thomas Aquinas: A Theological Study of Their Biblical Sources" (Toronto, 1985), subjected the office to a painstaking analysis of the text and the sources, and the results of his study were endorsed by his teacher Gy, there is no longer any serious doubt. The new edition that they were expected to prepare has not yet been published. I here use the edition in Thomas Aquinas, *Opera Omnia* XV (Parma, 1864), 233–38; and the edition by Tullio Bertamini, "La bolla 'Transiturus' di papa Urbano IV e l'ufficio del 'Corpus Domini' secondo il codice di S. Lorenzo di Bognanco," *Aevum* 42 (1968): 29–58.

96. BN Paris, MS lat. 1143. A. Kern, "Das Offizium De Corpore Christi in oesterreichischen Bibliotheken," *RB* 64 (1954): 46–67, esp. 57–61.

97. What I put forward here became clear to me in conversations with William Storey, the eminent liturgical specialist at Notre Dame University. He also generously produced an English translation for me of Juliana's office. Without his help this chapter could never have been written. See also the analysis by Cottiaux, "L'office liégeois."

98. Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist*, opened my eyes to what was actually at issue here, in contrast to Charles Caspers, *Eucharistische Vroomheid*, in particular 46–58, who expounds the confessional Roman Catholic view.

99. *VJ*, II, 6: 122.

100. *I Vesperis*, antiphon 1. See Innocentii III Papae, *De Sacro Altaris Mysteriorum Libri Sex*, IV, 44: ed. *PL* 217, 775–916, here 884. All the antiphons of *I Vesperis* are taken from this caput, *De diversis causis instituendis*. Lambot did not recognize this source and attributed the quotation to Hugh of St. Victor, *De Sacramento Corporis et Sanguinis Christi*: ed. *PL* 176, 462–72, here 467. In doing so Lambot unintentionally provides valuable insight into Juliana's criteria for selection. From the authoritative scholastic treatises she chooses quotations with a nonscholastic slant. This will be further dealt with below.

101. Pierre-Marie Gy, "Avancées du traité de l'eucharistie de S. Thomas dans la *Somme* par rapport aux *Sentences*," *RSPT* 77 (1993): 219–28, here 221; Mazza, *The Celebration*, 201.

102. See, for Thomas's use of these elements, Pierre-Marie Gy, "Les tropes dans l'histoire de la liturgie et de la théologie," in *Research on Tropes*, ed. G. Iversen (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1983), 7–16.

103. See note 100 and Christoph Egger, "Papst Innocenz III als Theologe: Beiträge zur Kenntnis seines Denkens im Rahmen der Frühscholastik," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 30 (1992): 55–123. Alger of Liège, *De Sacramentis*

Corporis et Sanguinis Dominici: ed. PL 180, 743–854; L. Brigué, “Alger de Liège,” in *Studia Eucharistica* (1246–1946) (Antwerp: Nederl. Boekhandel, 1946), 47–60, and *DThC* V, 1236–38; see also Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 21: Alger, in her opinion, “contributed an important direction for consideration in the century to come.”

104. Richard W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe II: The Heroic Age* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 5, who takes a stand against older ideas like those of De Ghellinck.

105. See Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*.

106. Cottiaux, “L’office liégeois,” 8.

107. Amalarius of Metz, *Liber officialis*, quoted in Mazza, *The Celebration*, 162–72. It is noteworthy that Amalarius was vehemently opposed by Florus of Lyon and his follower Jean de Fecamp; see 173–75: it is this Jean de Fecamp who is quoted at third hand by Juliana.

108. Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy*, 68, is one of the scholars who points out that in northern Europe Latin was a mandarin language, with all that this implies. Klaus Schreiner, “Laienfrömmigkeit im späten Mittelalter,” in *Laienfrömmigkeit im späten Mittelalter: Formen, Funktionen, politisch-soziale Zusammenhänge*, ed. idem and Elisabeth Müller-Lückner (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992), 306–16, also mentions the power the clergy derived from this, evident from such priestly practices as reciting the eucharistic prayers too softly for the ordinary people to hear them.

109. Hugh of St. Cher, *Tractatus super Missam seu Speculum Ecclesiae*: ed. Gisbertus Sölch (Münster: Asschendorff, 1940).

110. *VJ*. I, 11: 32: “et altaris sacramento quia corpore not poterat mente intererat, parte sui utique digniori.”

111. Included in the bull of Robert of Thourotte, published in *VJ*. II, 13: 152, note 728.

112. Thomas Aquinas in *I Vesperis*, oratio, and *Missa*, oratio: “Deus qui nobis sub Sacramento mirabili passionis, tuae memoriam reliquisti, tribue quaesumus ita nos Corporis et Sanguinis tui sacra mysteria venerari, ut redemptionis tuae fructum in nobis jugiter sentiamus.” Juliana gives a completely different twist to this commemoration; see her oratio in the *Missa*: “Deus qui gloriosum corporis et sanguinis Domini nostri Iesu Christi mysterium nobiscum manere voluisti, da nobis, quaesumus, eius presentiam corporalem ita venerari in terris ut de eius visione gaudere mereamur in coelis.”

113. J. Lamberts, “Liturgie et spiritualité de l’eucharistie au xiie siècle,” in *Fête-Dieu*, ed. Haquin, 81–95; also Pierre-Marie Gy, “La relation au Christ dans l’Eucharistie selon S. Bonaventure et S. Thomas d’Aquin,” in idem, *La liturgie*, 247–53.

114. Juliana in *I Vesperis*, respons. prolixum: “Iesus Christus unitatis signum, caritatis vinculum et pietatis sacramentum per ineffabilem dilectionis caritatem nobis largiri dignatus est”; also in *II Nocturno*, 3rd responsorium; cf. *Ad Tertiam*, capitulum from 1 Cor. 10: 16–17.

115. Juliana in *Completorium*, capitulum taken from Heb. 7: 28: “Lex hominum [thus OT] constituit sacerdotes infirmitatem habentes: sermo autem

iurisiurandi, qui post legem est [NT], Filium in aeternum perfectum”; priests hardly seem necessary anymore. See, for the theological implications, Pierre-Marie Gy, “Le ‘Nous’ de la prière eucharistique,” *La Maison Dieu* 191 (1992): 7–14.

116. Thomas in hymn *Ad Matutinas*: “Sic sacrificium istud instituit,/ Cujus officium committi voluit / solis presbyteris, quibus sic congruit, / Ut sumant, et dent ceteris.” In correspondence Father Torrell comments: “vous touchez un point qui m’a toujours un peu intrigué; il y a là une insistance sur le rôle du prêtre qui confine à la polémique; sur ce point, il se pourrait que vous ayez raison et qu’on trouve là un exemple de ‘dialogue’ entre une mystique et un théologien—même si le théologien a cru devoir faire une mise au point et peut-être une rectification des idées de Julienne. La question mérite toutefois d’être posée: Julienne ne mentionne pas le rôle du prêtre, c’est vrai, mais croyez-vous qu’elle l’exclut?” (My answer to the last question: this is what I read in the office, and because we have no other sources for Juliana I simply don’t know.) I am deeply grateful to Father Torrell for his comments on this chapter.

117. Juliana in *Laudes*, antiphon I; cf. collecta there.

118. Juliana in *I Nocturno*, response to the 3rd reading; another illuminating example is the 4th antiphon of *I Vesperis*: “de visibilibus ad invisibilia, de temporalibus ad aeterna, de terrenis ad caelestia, de humanis ad divina nos transferat.”

119. Thomas in the sequence in *Missa*. Cf. *I Vesperis* hymn: “Et si sensus deficit, / Ad firmandum cor sincerum / Sola fides [the general faith of the Church as pledge] sufficit.”

120. Gy, “L’Office liégeois,” 125. Edition Bertamini, “La bolla ‘Transiturus,’” 43: “Alia namque, quorum memoriam agimus, spiritu menteque complectimur, sed non propter hoc realem eorum praesentiam obtinemus.”

121. Emphasis mine. Latin text in note 112.

122. *II Vesperis*: “O sacrum convivium in quo Christus sumitur, recolitur memoria passionis ejus, mens impletur gratia, et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.” Needless to say, Aquinas pays more attention to these matters in his scholarly work.

123. See the texts in note 112.

124. John Bossy, “The Mass as a Social Institution, 1200–1700,” *Past and Present* 100 (1983): 29–61, here 33; cf. Josef A. Jungmann, “*Oblatio und Sacrificium* in der Geschichte des Eucharistieverständnisses,” *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 92 (1970): 342–50.

125. Mazza, *The Celebration*, 27.

126. Mazza, *The Celebration*, 22–28, 90–92, here 91.

127. Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy*, 6.

128. Louis-J. Bataillon, “Le Sermon inédit de S. Thomas,” *RSPT* 67 (1983): 353–69, with edition 360–68. Thomas in *Matutinas*, hymn.

129. Pierre-Marie Gy, “Les paroles de la consécration et l’unité de la prière eucharistique selon les théologiens de Pierre Lombard à S. Thomas d’Aquin,” *Studia Anselmiana* 79 (1980): 221–33. Mary M. Schaefer, *Twelfth-Century Latin Commentaries on the Mass: Christological and Ecclesiological Dimensions* (Ann

Arbor, Mich: University Microfilms, 1983), 45, even speaks of a “startling change of paradigm” that opens the way for a radical clericalization and “privatization of the eucharist.” Although Innocent III already concentrates on the priest, Juliana does not adopt any of these elements from his texts. See also the inspiring study by Brooke, “Priest, Deacon and Layman.”

130. Alger of Liège, *De Sacramentis*: 788D, quoted in Juliana in Noct. I and II: “quotidie lavat nos in sanguine suo [a peccatis nostris].”

131. Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy*, 72.

132. See the groundbreaking exhibition catalogue edited by Gabriele Finaldi, *The Image of Christ* (London: National Gallery, 2000).

133. *VJ*. I, 20: 60–62. On these different ways of knowing, see also Chapter 5 on the “unctione magistra” and my introduction to the volume *Seeing and Knowing: Women and Learning in Medieval Europe, 1200–1550* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 1–19. Here Juliana seems to follow the distinction made by the scholastic Philip the Chancellor; see note 84.

134. The following paragraphs are based mainly on what I have read of saints’ Lives and historiography from Brabant-Liège, as well as the letters of Hadewych, the exempla of Caesarius of Heisterbach, Thomas of Cantimpré, and early vernacular literature such as the *Poeme Moral*. My interpretation was inspired by Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*; Chiara Frugoni, “Female Mystics”; and the catalogue of the exhibition *Seeing Salvation: Images of Christ in Art*, ed. Neil MacGregor and Erika Langmuir (London: BBC, 2000).

135. Van Os, *The Art of Devotion*; James H. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: A Study of the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative* (Kortrijk: Van Ghemmert, 1979).

136. Bataillon-Beriou, “G. de Mailly,” 11.

137. *VIH*. VII, 18: 148; XXVI, 81: 160–61.

138. *VJ*. I, 28: 80: “aperuisset reclusa veronicam suam.” Cf. I, 20: 60: “fixis oculis in celum.” According to the best-known legend, a “Veronica” was an imprint of Christ’s face left on the handkerchief that Veronica offered to Jesus on his way to Golgotha. Other legends speak of a “True Face” of Christ left on a mandylion, of which icon paintings were made. The oldest and most famous one preserved in western Europe is the “Sainte Face” that Jacques Pantaleon gave to his sister in Laon in 1249! In view of Pantaleon’s intimate contacts with Eve and Juliana, Eve’s icon was very likely a “Sainte Face” of this kind. It was also precisely in these years that Matthew Paris painted a Holy Face into his chronicle; see Susanne Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronicon Majora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 126–29. In the next chapter I will return to the close relation between the spirituality of Pantaleon and that of the holy women (and Hugh of St. Cher), evident here.

139. Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 217. My own

opinion is that the doctrine of transubstantiation is as much a consequence—and not the cause, as Camille suggests—of a changing spirituality as the veneration of images.

140. *VJ*, I, 42: 102; *VMO*, II, 89: 567.

141. Both Christ and Mary were then believed to be “truly” present; see *DM*, VIII, 24: II, 100–101, which tells of an artist who excelled in painting crucifixes because once on Good Friday Christ had tapped him on the shoulder and said: Look at me closely, for this is a day “in qua non iam mentaliter vel per picturas figuraliter, sed praesentaliter, id est facie ad faciem me contempleris.” See also on this point the *Vera Icon*.

142. *VJ*, I, 16: 48–50.

143. *VJ*, I, 19: 58.

144. This same reasoning can be found in Geoffrey of Fontaines in the manuscript BN lat. 16297, fols. 237ra–rb.

145. Bossy, “Mass as a Social Institution,” 34, who follows in the footsteps of Mervyn James, “Ritual, Drama, and the Social Body,” *Past and Present* 98 (1983): 3–29.

146. Cottiaux, *Sainte Julienne*, 190.

147. Included in the text of the *Vita*: *VJ*, II, 15: 160–64. Although Hugh respectfully cited Juliana, he gave his own theological foundation for the feast based on the atonement doctrine of Anselm; for him the Eucharist served to forgive our daily sins—the view Juliana rejected.

148. This is the central theme of Miri Rubin’s book, *Corpus Christi*.

149. See especially Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas d’Aquin, maître spirituel* (Freiburg & Paris: Cerf, 1996).

150. Jean-Pierre Torrell, “L’Authenticité de l’*Adoro te devote*,” *Revue des sciences religieuses* 67 (1993): 79–83; versus Pierre-Marie Gy, “Avancées,” who followed André Wilmart on this question. See Robert Wiclockx, “Poetry and Theology in the *Adoro te devote*: Thomas Aquinas on the Eucharist and Christ’s Uniqueness,” in *Christ Among Medieval Dominicans*, ed. Kent Emery jr. and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998): 157–74. Father Torrell writes me that this study also persuaded Father Gy to accept Aquinas as author. In very recent years scholars such as Torrell and Wawrykow have stressed even that there is an “affective stream” in Aquinas’s work that surfaces in the years after he worked on the *Corpus Christi*.

151. Brigué, “Alger de Liège,” 53.

Chapter 5

1. The most important source for Eve (d. after 1264) is again the *Vita Julianae* (*VJ*), written during her lifetime by an anonymous author on the basis of Eve’s own notes; for editions and translations, see Chapter 4, note 1. Here *VJ*, I, 26: 74–76: “quedam puella que gratiam familiaritatis eius fuerat assecuta.” This is generally assumed to be Eve. Studies on Eve: Joseph Demarteau, *La Bienheureuse Ève de Saint-Martin: Notes d’histoire* (Liège: Demarteau, 1896);

Joseff [Abbé], *Vie de Sainte Ève, recluse de Saint-Martin, à Liège* (Liège: Demarteau, 1902), especially for her veneration; W. Vowles, “Eve, Recluse, and the Feast of Corpus Christi,” *Downside Review* 58 (1940): 420–37; Simone Roisin, “Ève (Bienheureuse),” *DHGE* XVI, 114–17; Cyrille Lambot, “Eve de Saint-Martin”; *Saint-Martin: Mémoire de Liège*, catalogue ed. Marylene Laffineur-Crepin (Liège: Perron, 1990), with illuminating notes by Delville. See also the records of canonization documents, *Leodiensis Confirmationis cultus ab immemorabili tempore praestiti servae dei Hevae, sanctimonialis reclusae S. Martini Leodiensis*, placed in the Vatican Library, R.G. Riti II.213, in 1902.

2. Edition by Lambot, “La bulle d’Urbain IV,” quotation 269–70. The bull has not been preserved *in originali*, but there are several copies left. A salient point here is that the medieval copies are shorter than the later ones on which the modern edition is based. They lack the papal titles and thus the pompous tone that the later copies have in common with the “companion bull” sent to Henry of Guelders in Liège (also in September 1264, and preserved *in originali*). I assume that modern scholars (including Lambot) could not understand why Urban would have sent to one person (Eve) a bull without formalities and to another (Henry) one with pomp and circumstance; they probably thought that earlier copyists had forgotten to include the titles and rectified this “omission” themselves.

3. *VJ*. Prologue: 4–6: “Que quidem per diligentiam unius valde religiose persone veluti quedam fragmenta ne perirent in lingua gallica litteris commendata et per dominum joannem de lausenna . . . approbata sunt. Cujus etiam vita et mors que jam intervenit preciosa non brevem commendationem sed opus proprium desiderat. . . . Hoc solum fuit quod tanto viro cum sibi recitaretur quod per prefatam personam collectum fuerat potuit displicere quod nullus sermo sanctitatem, puritatem, caritatem et justicie zelum nostre virginis quam ipse pre cunctis viris melius cognoverat digne poterat explicare.”

4. See note 1 and Balau, *Étude critique*, 438–42. *Vitae* of other thirteenth-century devout women also omit names when referring to conversation partners and friends; see, e.g., Beatrice of Nazareth and Ida of Nivelles.

5. A certain parallel can be drawn with the *Life of Margaret of Ypres*; see *VMY*. 106: Prologue. Thomas of Cantimpré, who had not known the young woman personally, wrote the *Vita* on the basis of short notes made by Margaret’s confessor Zeger: “duobus membranis parvulis memorabilia vite illius te narrante.”

6. Eve is almost never cited as the source of the pious martyr motifs.

7. Fisen, *Origo prima Festi Corporis Christi*, 252. About the papal bull he remarks, “quale in hodiernum diem in tabulario Martiniano magna fide asseruatur” and edits the short version! This in itself indicates that he must have seen the original. I will come back to Fisen’s qualification of the Latin hagiographer’s work; see text and notes 17 and 18. Also Joannes Chapeaville, *Tractatus historicus de prima et vera origine festivitatis sacratissimi Corporis et Sanguinis Domini*, in idem, *Qui Gesta Pontificum Leodiensium scripserunt auctores*, 3 vols. (Liège: Chr. Ouwerx, 1613), vol. II, 641–58, here 641, speaks of “veteribus M.S. codicibus pluribus” and mentions, 655, that the *Epistola* of Urban to Eve is in the archive.

8. Eve is cited as the source for the following episodes:

1. On fasting: *VJ*. I, 15: 44: “familiarem sibi personam veniens visitare” [Eve in her cell; usually visitors came to Juliana].
2. Visions: I, 19: 58: “ad quendam dilectam sibi personam visitandi gratia divertisset.” I, 20: 60: “cum iuliana . . . ad eam familiaritatis gratia venisset.”
3. Prophetic gifts concerning the present: I, 22: 66: “venerat . . . ad laudabilis vite evam, reclusam sancti martini.” I, 23: 68: “ab ipsa reclusa . . . suscepta.” Prophetic gifts relating to the past: I, 28: 78: “venit ad eam quam prefati sumus ecclesiam sancti martini reclusam.” Relating to the future: I, 29: 82: “dicta reclusa.” I, 30: 82: “sicut ipsa reclusa usque hodie magnifice protestatur.” II, 5: 118: “solet . . . reclusa sancti martini narrare.” II, 8: 134: Isabelle goes to “reclusam sancti martini.” II, 9: 136: “recluse sancti martini.” II, 10: 144: “recluse sancti martini.” II, 20: 174–76: “colloquio quem reclusa sancti martini habebat cum iuliana de devota sollempnitate sacramenti.” II, 25: 190: “reclusa sancti martini.” II, 26: 194: “reclusa sancti martini.” II, 38: 230: “in cuiusdam recluse reclusorio.” II, 42: 234: “quedam venerabilis vite reclusa.” II, 54: 266: “quedam vite laudabilis et probate persona que christi virginem iulianam viventem in corpore non mediocriter dilexerat” receives her own great vision. Cf. also II, 29: 200: “cuidam religiose persone”? And II, 52: 264: “quedam vite venerabilis persona”?

9. *VJ*. I, 17: 50–52; II, 34: 218. The hagiographer also speaks very highly of Juliana’s confidante Isabelle of Huy, but she died before she could have been of any use to him.

10. *VJ*. II, 45: 242: at the end of the *Vita* the author says that Juliana had always revealed “abscondita cordis sui” to “uni de fidelissimis suis qui totius vite sue seriem in corpore et anima cognovisset, qui ex precognitis facilius que diceret intelligeret, crederet, et scripto diligentius commendaret.” He thus once again characterizes Juliana’s confidante and the author of the *Fragmenta* in a way that points to Eve.

11. See below.

12. *VJ*. II, 45: 240–42. See, by way of contrast, the consciously planned *memoria* of Yvette of Huy and Lame Margaret.

13. This mistakenly led Demarteau to collect as Eve’s “memoirs” only the sections in which she is mentioned by name or is acting herself.

14. Lambot, “Ève et les premiers historiens,” mentions John of Hocsem and John of Warnant (almost no information), Jean d’Outremeuse, *Ly Myreur des histors* (romanticized, but with some interesting facts that I will use later), Cornelis Menghers of Zantvliet, Adriaan Oudenbosch, and especially John Blaer of Diest and William Fanius. The work by Fanius, canon of St. Martin, has been lost, but because it was used by Lambert Le Ruyte of Cornillon, some new information can be gleaned through him. Lambot also refers to the anonymous writer in MS Brussels, KB 9159–61, fols. 1v–7v, the second part of a Bible in which *De Primo motivo et primaria institutione sacramenti* is written on blank folios.

15. John Blaer of Diest [Ioannes Diestemius Blaerus], *Historia de Revelatione Institutionis Festi Venerabilis sacramenti*, in *Magnum Speculum Exemplorum*, ed. Joannis Maior, 3rd ed. (Douai, 1607), 340–45, here 343: “Nam sola B. Martini Canonica hanc iussionem [the instituting decision of Robert of Thourotte], caeteris omnibus dissimulantibus adimplere curauit. In qua siquidem sancti Martini Ecclesia habitauit in tempore illo quaedam sanctimonialis foemina, nomine Eua, angelicam habens conuersationem, quam praedicta Iuliana per Euangelium Domino genuerat, propter hoc crebro ad eam veniebat, et de secretis coelestibus cum ea conferebat. Quae Eua pro suae vitae merito tantam apud Canonicos praefatae sancti Martini Ecclesiae meruerat gratiam, vt ad eius monitionem solemnitatem nouam de V. Sacramento primi celebrandam susciperent, infinitis infidorum hominum latratibus rite contemptis.”

16. *VJ.* Prologue: 6; *VJ.* II, 20: 174; II, 45: 242.

17. See Fisen’s opinion in *Origo prima Festi*, 252, quoted above (p. 121).

18. Fisen, *Origo prima Festi*, 38; see p. 121.

19. Cf. *VJ.* Prologue: 6: “brevis commendatio.” Voaden, *God’s Words*, 46: the “discretio spiritum” is in essence a “discretio” of virtues. Consequently all authors begin with a short catalogue of Juliana’s virtues.

20. *VJ.* II, 6–20: 120–76, concluding with a prophecy that lacks a context here. But see Blaer, *Historia de Revelatione*, 343, where after the first celebration of the feast in St. Martin in 1247, Eve is concerned that other parishes still refuse to celebrate the festival, and Juliana responds with this prophecy.

21. See, e.g., the Anonymous, fol. 6v: “Post recessum christi virginis Juliane requieuit spiritus eius super Evam Sancti Martini ut non minus ad promotionem sancte solempnitatis afficeretur.”

22. In addition to the authors mentioned, see Jean Bertholet, *Histoire de l’institution de la Fête-Dieu avec la vie des bienheureuses Julienne et Eve* (Liège: Barçon & Jacob, 1746); 3rd ed. (Liège: Oudart, 1846) with publication of sources. Charters provide little extra information; see J-G. Schoonbroodt, *Inventaire analytique et chronologique des chartes du chapitre de Saint-Martin à Liège* (Liège: Desoer, 1871).

23. Cottiaux, *Sainte Julienne*, 139.

24. *VJ.* II, 25: 186.

25. Blaer of Diest, *Historia*, 343.

26. *VJ.* I, 22: 66.

27. See the touching passage in *VJ.* I, 22: 66–68, which speaks of “humana fragilitas” and the “sublimitas propositi.”

28. According to *VJ.* II, 8: 132, Juliana could not do without her assistant Isabelle, who took over her responsibilities; and, according to II, 21: 178, and II, 28: 198, it was the sisters, not Juliana, who engaged in crisis management when problems arose with the city.

29. *VJ.* I, 22: 66.

30. *VJ.* II, 44: 238.

31. See Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001).

32. *Vitae B. Odilae* [VO.] 197–287; *DM.* XI, 29: II, 294–95; also Aegidius

of Orval, *Gesta Episcoporum Leodiensium: Vitae Odiliae Liber III de triumpho S. Lamberti in Steppes*, in *MGH SS* 25, 169-91.

33. See Lame Margaret of Magdeburg, who went to live in the "new town"; and the oldest beguinages, which were often built outside the old city.

34. Kupper, "La cité de Liège," in *Fête-Dieu*, ed. Haquin, 19-26; Fernand Vercauteren, *Luttes sociales à Liège (xiii^e et xiv^e siècles)*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Renaissance du Livre, 1946); Godefroid Kurth, *La cité de Liège au Moyen-Âge*, 3 vols. (Brussels, Dewit, 1910), I.

35. See the entertaining diatribe by Jacques Pantaleon, "Une oeuvre liegeoise inedite de Jacques de Troyes, le futur pape Urbain IV," ed. Cyrille Lambert, in *Melanges Felix Rousseau: Etudes sur l'histoire du pays mosan au Moyen Âge* (Brussels: Renaissance du Livre, 1958), 401-12.

36. Married priests: *VO*. III: 205.

37. In *VJ*. II, 29: 200-202, the hagiographer seems to allude to the civil war in the years 1253-56, when Henry of Dinant opposed the bishop and the feudal lords and found support in the lower strata of the city's population, a struggle that thereby acquired "une coloration sociale"; see Jacques Stiennon, ed., *Histoire de Liège* (Toulouse: Privat, 1991-), I, 52. These lower classes can be compared to the *humiles* of Juliana on the religious plane. See also Jean-Louis Kupper, "Note sur Henri de Dinant," *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique liégeois* 98 (1986): 339-49.

38. Marchandisse, *La fonction épiscopale*, 124-42, with factual information but lacking insight into the religious problems. Robert thus followed in the footsteps of his French predecessors Hugh of Pierremont and John of Eppes.

39. Visconti was archdeacon in the years 1246-71. Émile Schoolmeesters, "Tableau des Archidiaques de Liège pendant le xiii^e siècle," *Leodium* 2 (1903), 3-5.

40. Even the *Vita* written by his younger contemporary Gregory of Naples is hardly accessible in its rare early edition, *Papirius Masson, Libri Sex de episcopis Urbis, qui Romanam ecclesiam rexerunt* (Paris: Apud Sebastianum Nivellum, 1586) fols. 223-46; see Agostino Paravicini-Bagliani, "Gregorio da Napoli, Biografo di Urbano IV," *Römische historische Mitteilungen* 11 (1969): 59-78; I consulted the copy in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. See Wilhelm Sievert, "Das Vorleben des Papstes Urban IV," *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Alterthums-kunde und für Kirchengeschichte* 10 (1896): 451-505; Darsonville, "Urbain IV et la Fête-Dieu à Laon," *Bulletin de la Société d'Art et d'Histoire du diocèse de Liège* 13 (1902): 297-402; G. Simenon, "Urbain IV à Liège," *Revue ecclésiastique de Liège* 26 (1934-35): 84-94. Fredegando Callacy, "Documentazione Eucaristica Liegese dal vescovo di Liegi Roberto di Torote al Papa Urbano IV (1240-1264)," *Lateranum* 14 (1949): 215-37, provides no new information. Recently, however, local researchers in Laon have been uncovering surprising material: see Martinet, *Montlonte*, 123-27; and idem, *La Sainte Face de Laon et son histoire* (Laon: Courrier de l'Aisne, 1988); unfortunately, I have not been able to get hold of other studies by Martinet. An excellent introduction can be found in the lemma "Urban IV" in *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia* (New York & London: Routledge, 2002), III, 1554-55.

41. Jacques Foviaux, "Les sermons donnés à Laon en 1242, par le chanoine

Jacques de Troyes, futur Urbain IV,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 20 (1985): 203–56 and note 40.

42. Martinet, *Sainte Face*, 6.

43. Autbertus Miraeus and Joannes F. Foppens, *Opera diplomatica et historica*, 4 vols., 2nd ed. (Brussels: Foppens, 1723), I, 429–30. The first brief, of 7 July, 1262, is directed to the “collegii Beghinarum et Recluserum” (see below), whom the “sedes Apostolica” will protect like a “pia mater”; the second, of 11 July, 1262, is to the dean of Liège—perhaps Archdeacon Visconti, Urban’s successor as pope, who would depose Henry of Guelders? It contains a sneer at the “malignorum malitiis,” under whom the beguines and recluses were suffering.

44. See, for the authority of legates, men who acted as “genuine popes,” Bruno Galland, “Les hommes de culture dans la diplomatie pontificale au xiii^e siècle,” *MEFRMA* 108 (1996): 615–43. He also points out the small number of cardinals: 6!

45. Eve either had or could have had contact with Marie of St. Adalbert, Marie of St. Denis, Marie of St. Etienne, Oudon of St. Jean-Baptist, Gertrudis of St. Madeleine, and Helluy of St. Pierre. Alida and Hedwig of St. Remacle, a church near the leprosarium, are mentioned in the *Vita*. In her youth she may have heard about Odilia of St. Severin, of whom we have a *Vita*. See J. Cruls, “Notice sur les recluseries du Moyen Âge,” in idem, *Le saint Sacrement et l’Église de Saint-Martin à Liège* (Liège: Dessain, 1881), 179–217; and my own inventory, that is still in the making.

46. Bormans and Schoolmeesters, eds., *Cartulaire*, I, 132–34.

47. Until then, the lepers’ convent was organized as a community with a prioress and a prior but no rule. The municipal administrators were not in favor of having a rule. We can imagine that Juliana was grateful to have prior John “the Bad” removed; but I am less sure that she was happy with the rule, see below. Robert’s successor, Henry of Guelders, annulled the reform. See Hankart, “L’Hospice de Cornillon”; and De Spiegel, “La léproserie de Cornillon.”

48. Charter of Henry of Guelders of August 1, 1266, edited by Jean Paquay, “L’archidiaconat liégeois d’Urbain IV,” *Leodium* 2 (1903): 60–63, here 61. See also idem, *Regesta de Renier, écolâtre de Tongres, vicaire général de Henri de Gueldre* (Liège, 1905). Partial Middle Dutch translation/adaptation in Jan Paquay, “Het eerste statuut der begijnhoven,” *Verzamelde Opstellen* 11 (1935): 185–204; see, in addition, the Epilogue, also for the following paragraphs.

49. The formulation is reminiscent of the briefs of Pope Innocent IV to the Dominicans, thus of the Church policy on religious women advocated by Hugh of St. Cher; see the Epilogue.

50. See note 43.

51. Jean Leclercq, “Théorie et pratique de la clôture au Moyen Âge,” in *Les religieuses dans le cloître et dans le monde des origines à nos jours* (Poitiers: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 1994), 471–77; idem, “La clôture,” 367–76, quotation 367; Katherine Gill, “*Scandala*: Controversies Concerning *Clausura* and Women’s Religious Communities in Late Medieval Italy,” in *Christendom and Its Discontents*, ed. Waugh and Diehl, 177–203; Elisabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and Its Commentators*

(Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997); Mary Laven, *Virgins of Venice: Enclosed Lives and Broken Vows in the Renaissance Convent* (London: Vintage, 2002). See also the Epilogue.

52. See the bull of Innocent IV of 1246 for virgins in Germany, in which he refers to *Gloriam virginalem*, in *Osnabrücker Urkundenbuch*, ed. F. Philippi et al., 7 vols., 2nd ed. (Osnabrück: Wenner, 1969–96), IV, 434.

53. All women “religionem tacite vel expressae professae” would “sub perpetua in suis monasteriis debere de cetero premanere clausura . . .” Edition in *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, ed. Aemilius Friedberg, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1881), II, 1053–54.

54. Jean Guiraud, *Les registres d'Urbain IV (1261–1264)*, 4 vols. (Paris: Fontemoing), II (1901), 210–19, here 211: “hanc eas legem vitae et discipline oportet et convenit observare, vivendo in obedientia, sine proprio, in castitate et etiam sub clausura”; at the same time, he gave them free rein for intellectual and devotional development.

55. Jean d'Outremeuse, *Ly Mireur des histors*, 362–63, quoted in Lambot, “Ève et les premiers historiens,” 250.

56. Foviaux, “Les sermons,” which contains images of God as a nursing mother (229, 230, 239).

57. Martinet, *Montloon*, 124.

58. Peter Bowe, “Die Sterbekommunion im Altertum und Mittelalter,” *Zeitschrift für kirchliche Theologie* 60 (1936): 1–54, here 37.

59. Edition in AASS, 4 Februarii, IV, 456; trans. Martinet, *Sainte Face*, 4–6.

60. VO. 218–19. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 74, also sees in recluses “a social resonance in the urban community that few religious men could equal.”

61. Juliana often delivered entire “sermons” to the sisters in Cornillon: VJ. I, 6: 22; also outside the convent: I, 8: 26.

62. VJ. II, 16–18: 164–72 and note 245. Might this be Maria de Bacenges, who out of gratitude left a house to St. Martin? See Schoonbroodt, *Inventaire*, 21, no. 73 dated 8–7-1261.

63. VJ. II, 53: 264.

64. VJ. II, 20: 174: Eve often had to bring Juliana back to reality when she went into an ecstasy or emitted an uncontrollable flood of words; see VJ. I, 28: 78–80. See the great difference between the calming effect of Eve and the way Ermentrude, in Fosses, only further upsets Juliana: II, 45: 242.

65. VJ. II, 8: 132–36. The hagiographer interprets this as a test of Juliana, but from a historical perspective I find my explanation more convincing.

66. VJ. II, 20: 176; II, 6: 124; I, 13: 38.

67. VJ. II, 25: 190; see for Guiard Chapter 4 (Juliana).

68. Jean-Pierre Delville, “Jean de Lausanne,” in DHGE, XXV, 214–16 and *Saint-Martin: Memoire de Liège*, 37. Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, even made him the author of the Corpus Christi office.

69. VJ. II, 37: 228; VJ. II, 7: 126. It was more assistance on the practical level, such as making his house available or helping finance a new *recluserium*; see VJ. II, 22: 182; II, 25: 186.

70. Jean d'Outremeuse, *Ly Myreur*, quoted in Lambot, “Ève et les premiers

historiens,” 250: “Et avoit esteit longe temps devant [1264] celle fieste manifeite par l’angle de dieu à Juliane, beghine de Cornelhon deleis Liege, laquelle en avoit mainte fois parleit à Eve de Saint-Martin et ensi à Ysabeal qui estoit beghine à Huy. Et en la fin, ensi comme dit est, fut la dit fieste exaltée par Eve de Saint-Martin, portant qu’elle avoit cognisanche et amisteit al pape Urbain.” See also Blaer of Diest as quoted in note 15.

71. Muessig, “Prophecy and Song,” 146–69.

72. Matt. 28: 20; *VJ*, I, 19: 58.

73. Wybren Scheepisma, “Beatrice of Nazareth: The First Woman Author of Mystical Texts,” in *Seeing and Knowing*, ed. Mulder-Bakker, 49–66.

74. Staubach, “*Diversa raptim undique collecta*”; Thom Mertens, “Rapiarium,” *DS* XIII, 114–19; Anne Bollmann, “Being a Woman on My Own”: Alijt Bake (1415–1455) as Reformer of the Inner Self,” in *Seeing and Knowing*, ed. Mulder-Bakker, 67–96.

75. Cf. Christ’s explaining in a vision to Birgitta of Sweden that he used parables because “spiritualia non potest percipere nisi per corporalia,” just as Ambrose appeared to her: “loquens tecum per similitudinem, quoniam cor tuum non potest capere intelligenciam spiritualium sine similitudine aliqua corporali”; quoted in Claire Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden and the Voice of Prophecy* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2001), 68. These quotations say more about the condescending judgment of the male authors than about the qualifications of the women, but women who wanted to be heard were well advised to adapt to this male “discourse”; see Voaden, *God’s Words*, 35; and Chapter 4 (Juliana). Cf. Walter Ong, “Orality, Literacy, and Medieval Textualization,” *New Literary History* 16 (1984): 1–11.

76. Cf. Claude Bremond, Jean Claude Schmitt and Jacques LeGoff, *L’Exemplum*, Typologie des sources 40 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982). I am indebted to Aaron J. Gurjewitsch [Gurevich], *Himmliches und Irdisches Leben: Bildwelten des schriftlosen Menschen im 13. Jahrhundert: Die Exempel* (Amsterdam & Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1997), 55–128, for my interpretation of the exemplum genre.

77. Scholars such as Bürkle, Ruhrberg, and Wehrli-Johns, with Ursula Peters leading the way, argue that Herbert Grundmann’s thought-provoking study *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter* (first edition 1935 but successful only with the second edition 1961) had the positive effect of making the spirituality of laypersons and women visible for the first time, but that on the negative side Grundmann reduced women to aliterary creatures who, on their own or via their confessors, committed their inner feelings to paper in the form of emotional outbursts. Their mystical writings, the first ever in the vernacular, were not viewed as literary products with an authorial “I,” a program, and a literary function but as unmediated life experience, as “Erlebnismystik.” Like the scholars mentioned above, I believe the texts by and about these women should be studied as literary products. See, among others, Susanne Bürkle, *Literatur im Kloster: Historische Funktion und rhetorische Legitimation frauenmystischer Texte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen & Basel: Francke, 1999); Gertrud Jaron Lewis, *By Women, For Women, About Women: The Sister-Books of Fourteenth-Century Germany* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1996); Ruhrberg, *Der literarische Körper der*

Heiligen; Ursula Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum: Zur Vorgeschichte und Genese frauenmystischer Texte des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988); Martina Wehrli-Johns, "Voraussetzungen und Perspektiven mittelalterlicher Laienfrömmigkeit seit Innozenz III: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Herbert Grundmanns 'Religiöse Bewegungen,'" *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 104 (1996): 286–309; Zimmermann, "Neue Perspektiven, 175–91; and idem, *Gott im Denken berühren*.

78. See Chapter 4: the hagiographer speaks of Juliana's *annus affectionum*, see *VJ*. I, 16: 48.

79. John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 71.

80. *VJ*. I, 20: 60. Did Eve, or Eve and Juliana, discuss matters of this kind with Hugh of St. Cher? In the Prologue to his Commentary on the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard he also deals with the Trinity and the problem of distinction and division; see John Fisher, "Hugh of St. Cher and the Development of Medieval Theology," *Speculum* 31 (1956): 57–69, especially 66, note 50: "hoc totum et perfectum idem." However this may be, the similarity between Eve's ideas and scholastic developments of that moment underscores the theological significance of Eve's "anecdotes."

81. *VJ*. I, 28: 80; I, 22: 68; on Juliana's devotion for the eucharist: I, 10–12: 28–36, for which Eve is not named as the informant. See also Chapter 4.

82. *VJ*. I, 7: 24; I, 20: 62; II, 2: 108; II, 4: 118; II, 14: 158. Through the unction of the Holy Spirit the prophetess assumed a position equal to that of the deaconess in the early church; see Chapter 1 (Bees).

83. Yves-Anselme Baudelet, *L'expérience spirituelle selon Guillaume de Saint-Thierry* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 92. More thirteenth-century religious women, according to their *Vitae*, received their wisdom/knowledge through the unction of the Holy Spirit; for example, *VMO*. II, v, 42: 557: "spiritu sapientiae"; and Odilia of Liège, *VO*. 217: "magistra paracliti Spiritus unctione."

84. Paul Verdeijen, "De invloed van Willem van Saint-Thierry op Hade-wijch en Ruusbroec," *OGE* 51 (1977): 3–19; see, for the dissemination of this text, also in the Liège area, Volker Honemann, *Die "Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei" des Wilhelm von Saint-Thierry: Lateinische Überlieferung und mittelalterliche Übersetzungen* (Munich: Artemis, 1978). See also Chapter 7 (Living Saints).

85. *VJ*. I, 20: 62.

86. After Hildegard of Bingen and Elisabeth of Schönau had profiled themselves as mystics and prophetesses in historical practice, this became a generally accepted construct; see Elisabeth Gössmann, "Ipsa enim quasi domus sapientiae? Die Frau ist gleichsam das Haus der Weisheit: Zur frauenbezogenen Spiritualität Hildegards von Bingen," in idem, *Hildegard von Bingen: Versuche einer Annäherung* (Munich: Iudicium, 1995), 93–113; Peter Dinzelsbacher, "Das politische Wirken der Mystikerinnen in Kirche und Staat: Hildegard, Birgitta, Katharina," in *Religiöse Frauenbewegung und mystische Frömmigkeit im Mittelalter*, ed. idem and Dieter Bauer (Cologne & Vienna: Böhlau, 1988), 265–302; and the fine study by Claudia Eliass, *Die Frau ist die Quelle der Weisheit: Weibliches Selbstverständnis in der Frauenmystik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts* (Pfarrenweiler: Centaurus, 1995).

87. *VJ.* II, 20: 174–76. Juliana believed this would at first (ca. 1230) exceed Eve's capabilities, but "tempore vero procedente, sermo virginis in ipsa reclusa specialiter impletus est."

88. *VJ.* II, 8: 132–36.

89. When the young girl Eve visited Juliana, *VJ.* I, 26: 74, the latter prayed that heavenly powers might be poured out on both of them; this was Eve's first mystical experience. After hearing of Juliana's sacramental visions, she asked Juliana to pray for her, II, 20: 174, "quatenus michi donare dignetur [Christus], ut de ipso sacramento sentiam quod sentitis." She then did receive flashes of prophetic insight, for example, II, 42: 234, concerning the death of Prior John; II, 43: 236, about Juliana, who at that moment was suffering greatly; II, 52: 264, about Juliana being received into heaven; but only in II, 54: 266 (quotation) does she experience a great ecstasy.

90. *VJ.* II, 20: 176.

91. *VJ.* II, 28: 198.

92. *VJ.* II, 28: 198; in II, 38: 228–30, a loyal fellow sister from Cornillon who visited Juliana in her exile suggested: "Multa eorum que imposuistis ipsi priori domina mea non creduntur a pluribus vera esse, plusque iusto eidem dicimini nocuisse."

93. *VJ.* II, 32: 208–12; II, 33: 216–18: Bishop Guiard warned: "subiectioni et protectioni prefate abbatisse se . . . subdiderunt, ne absque superiore sed *solo proprie voluntatis arbitrio vivere* dicerentur [emphasis mine]"; II, 44: 238.

94. *VJ.* II, 10: 144.

95. By emphasizing her suffering under injustice (while indicating between the lines that it was not really necessary) he contributes to the rise of what Bürkle, *Literatur im Kloster*, 31, characterizes for Germany as the "mit den Beginen verbundenen Vorstellung einer freien vagierenden, aber schon zunehmend von der Kurie häretisierten Existenz [and also] zu einer quasi neuzeitlichen literarhistorischen Qualifizierung dieser Texte als 'konventikelhafte,' inoffizielle Diskurse am Rande des etablierten Literaturbetriebs."

96. I, 8, 9: 24–26.

97. Hadewijch, *Brief XXIII*, ed. trans. Paul Mommaers, *De Brieven van Hadewijch* (Kampen: Kok, 1990), 193.

Chapter 6

1. The Latin *Vita* was first published by Paul Gerhard Schmidt, *Die Vita der Margareta contracta, einer Magdeburger Rekluse des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Benno Verlag, 1992), which I quote as *VMC.* with chapter number and page of the edition. The epigraph: *VMC.* 34: 37: "In hiis verbis, que hec scripta sunt, non multum iacet de laude Dei, sed ideo scripta sunt, ut per ea bonitatem Dei aliquo modo cognoscamus. Laus autem Dei in corde Margarete fuit ex gratitudine, quam habuit ex cognitione istorum verborum." Although known to the Bollandists as BHL 5322 for 22/5, the *Vita* was never published in the *AASS*. There is now an English translation by Gertrud and Tilman Lewis, *The Vita of Margaret the Lame, a Thirteenth-Century German Recluse and Mystic, by Friar Johannes O.P.*

of *Magdeburg* (Toronto: Peregrina Publications, 2001); I prefer my own translation. This chapter is based on my own historical studies of Margaret: “Margaret the Lame of Magdeburg: The Social Function of a Medieval Recluse,” *Journal of Medieval History* 22 (1996): 155–69; and “De stichtige punten van Kreupele Margriet,” *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 47 (1997): 131–142. Bardo Weiss provided a German paraphrase of the *Vita* in *Margareta von Magdeburg: Eine gelähmte Mystikerin des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1995). See also Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* II, 125–29; and McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, 194–97.

2. William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, 2 vols. (New York: Alba House, 1966), I, 202, 287–95; II, 47–63; John B. Freed, *The Friars and German Society in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1977), 139.

3. *VMC.* 2: 3.

4. *VMC.* 63: 86: “sedit iuxta ecclesiam sancti Albani quasi in platea, ubi ad eam omnium patebat accessus.” I interpret this “platea” as the Platea Lata or Broadway, the main street of the old town, on which the episcopal close and the Church of Our Lady were located and to which the Dominicans would move in 1224; see the fourteenth-century *Magdeburger Schöppchenchronik*, ed. K. Janicke in *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte* (Leipzig, 1869), reprint (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), VII, 146; and Matthias Pühle, ed., *Hanse—Städte—Bünde* (Magdeburg: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1996). In 1208 a large fire ravaged the old town. After the new town was destroyed in 1211, Archbishop Albrecht II oversaw a splendid rebuilding of the cathedral and granted the new town a city franchise and, in 1230, a surrounding wall. Margaret could therefore have profited from these renewals.

5. *VMC.* 3: 4: “apparentiam exterius coram hominibus.” Mechthild of Magdeburg knew the same fear; see Mechthild of Magdeburg, *Das Fliessende Licht der Gottheit nach der Einsiedler Handschrift in kritischem Vergleich mit der gesamten Überlieferungen*, IV, 2: ed. Hans Neumann, publ. G. Vollmann-Profe, 2 vols. (Munich: Artemis, 1990–91), I; English trans. Frank Tobin, *Mechthild of Magdeburg: The Flowing Light of the Godhead* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 140: “I had had the desire to be despised through no fault of my own. Then for the sake of God’s love I moved to a town where no one was my friend except for one person.”

6. Key words: “pena, abiectio et paupertas,” see *VMC.* 1: 3; 7: 9–11; 35: 38; 59: 73. Cf. 31: 34, and the opposite, 59: 73, to be discussed later.

7. *VMC.* 4: 7.

8. *VMC.* 3: 4; 61: 82.

9. *VMC.* 3: 5. Cf. 45: 47–50.

10. According to the *Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*, ed. G. Schum, in *MGH SS* 14: 418, the Dominicans did not move to the town center until in 1229. If we follow this dating, Margaret’s chronology moves forward five years. McGinn’s assumption that Margaret was born around 1235 has no historical basis.

11. *VMC.* 63: 85. Other vague datings in the *Vita* confirm this reconstruction.

John, her confessor from 1224, says, *VMC.* 41: 44, that he neglected her for three or four years, bringing us to ca. 1230. After five years of suffering, *VMC.* 55: 59, M. entered a new phase: ca. 1235. After a subsequent phase (of five years?) John records the conversation with Christ about her thirty-third year: ca. 1240.

12. Mechthild scholars have not yet devoted any attention to possible contacts and reciprocal influences.

13. Kurt Ruh, "Mechthild von Magdeburg und Wichmann von Arnstein," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 120 (1991): 322–25, pointed out Wichmann's contact with and influence on Mechthild. I do the same here for Lame Margaret.

14. In their English translation, *The Vita of Margaret the Lame*, 61, Gertrud Lewis has Margaret brought "to the place where she later *died*." The Latin text, *VMC.* 43: 45, however, reads "in quo postea *morabatur*: where she later *stayed*." From the statement toward the end of the *Vita* in *VMC.* 69: 99: "quod adhuc noluit nominari" (which she has not wanted to mention till now), we may conclude that she was still alive at the time John wrote these words.

15. This manuscript, Berlin, Staatsbibl., Theol. Lat. Quart. 195, from Villers in Brabant, contains all sorts of errors and even contaminations from another version: the original text must therefore have been written well before 1270.

16. *VMC.* 7: 9.

17. *VMC.* 66: 92–93: "De sapientia habuit supra omnes homines, quos ego, frater Johannes, credo umquam oculis me vidisse, cum tamen multorum notitiam hominum habuerim in Brabantia et in diversis terris, religiosorum virorum et feminarum religiosarum tam claustralium quam earum, que Beghine vulgariter appelluntur."

18. Humbertus de Romanis, *Instructiones de officiis ordinis*, quoted by Jacqueline Murray, "The Absent Penitent," in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Smith and Taylor, I, 16–17. John B. Freed, "Urban Development and the 'Cura Monialium' in Thirteenth-Century Germany," *Viator* 3 (1972): 311–27, here 314, rightly points out that Dominicans in large parts of Germany and the southern Netherlands worked actively among devout women. The scholarly discussion has focused too narrowly on the refusal of the Dominicans (and other orders) to accept women's convents into the order and on their aversion to "cura monialium" in these convents. See Otmar Decker, *Die Stellung des Predigerordens zu den Dominicanerinnen (1207–1267)* (Leipzig: Vechta, 1935).

19. *VMC.* 3: 4. Cf. *VMC.* 43: 46.

20. *VMC.* 4: 6.

21. Quoted here from the Middle Dutch version *Leven van der heyligher maghet Croepel Margarite*, in MS The Hague, KB, 73 H 11, fols. 247–79, here 235v and 243. Cf. *VMC.* 9: 12; 46: 51.

22. *VMC.* 10: 13. We recognize here the policy of the Brabant confessors who also tried to push Lutgart of Tongeren and Mary of Oignies in the direction of the contemplative life. In contrast, we see the same passion to tell others about "the goodness of God" in other anchoresses, such as Julian of Norwich; see Denise Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

23. A few references: *VMC.* 9: 12: “Unde sepe assumpsit ad se magnos peccatores et multum fatigata fuit cum ipsis et pro ipsis, quomodo eos traheret a peccatis”; 11: 14: to the devil Margaret said: “ut felices fiant, data sum aliis hominibus in adiutorium et iuvamen”; 12: 14: “Tunc dedit intelligere ei Ihesus Christus, quod ei in hac vita laudabile nil esset sicut hoc, quod eam in omnibus orationibus et petitionibus exauditet”; 14: 16: John came to realize: “Benedictus Deus pater omnium, qui in subsidium fragilitatis nostre, non solum mihi, sed pluribus aliis, tam pretiosam contulit margaritam” (Matt. 13: 46); by then she already had special followers; 19: 22: Margaret evidently had companions: “illi, qui iuxta eam fuerunt”; 38: 42: “Domine . . . mitte michi illos, quos possim instruere et docere, ut ad cognitionem perfecte caritatis tue valeant pervenire” (see in the text below); 46: 51; 47: 52: “Aliquando indignanter averterunt se ab ea, quando ipsius sapientiam audierunt”; later, when she lived at the Agnes convent: 66: 89: “Omnes, qui fuerunt circa istam Margaretam, qui primo non curaverunt nec attenderunt verba sua, sed quasi despexerunt, per orationem eius sunt illuminati ad cognitionem.”

24. *VMC.* 38: 42; 45: 49. Cf. 43: 45; 69: 99.

25. *VMC.* 45: 50.

26. *VMC.* 43: 45–46.

27. *VMC.* 38: 42. Margaret asked God to imbue him with “talem cognitionem et caritatem in ipso, qualem ipsa habuit.”

28. *VMC.* 39: 42.

29. *VMC.* 4: 6.

30. Qualities of a good Christian: *VMC.* 37: 40–41; prayer: 13: 15–16; Trinity: 27: 28–30; Mary: 43: 45; seven torments of hell: 45: 47–50; communion: 53: 56–58; ten kinds of virtues: 66: 89–93.

31. *VMO.* II, vii, 69: 562.

32. *VMC.* 12: 14; 55: 62; 60: 77.

33. *VMC.* 56: 64; 56: 63: “tu es illorum ancilla, quibus de te vase gratia propinatur, quia per te mittitur eis gratia tamquam donum et exenium Domini per ancillam.” More religious women found this image appealing; see Hildegard of Bingen in Lieve van Acker, ed., *Hildegardis Bingensis Epistolarium*, CCCM 91, 91A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991–93), no. 201: “God fashioned the human being as a vessel through which he might accomplish his works”; and Birgitta of Sweden, *Revelationes* 8. 47: “a vessel overflowing with water,” quoted in Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden*, 101–2.

34. *VMC.* 60: 80; 9: 13: “Dixerunt enim homines, quod esset loquax et garrula et coram se faceret hospitale; she answered that: “fidelitas ad proximos coegit eam.” Cf. 11: 14: quotation in note 23.

35. *VMC.* 63–65: 85–88.

36. *VMC.* 63: 87: “Tunc desideravit, quod deus daret ei in competenti loco ita vivere, quod laudabile ei esset et ad utilitatem aliorum.” The *Vita* calls the convent “claustrum ad sanctam A.” The Agnes convent is the only possibility here. Lewis and others assume that Margaret now entered the Cistercian order, but I disagree. Margaret described the new place as: “ad utilitatem aliorum.” John also wanted her: “alibi recludi [as an anchoress, in other words], si possibile

fuisse apud fratres predicatorum iuxta ecclesiam sancti Pauli.” But it turned out to be the Agnes convent. She simply continued her anchoritic life there, which also explains why in the eventual title of the *Vita* she is referred to as a recluse or anchoress, not as a Cistercian nun.

37. *VMC.* 65–66: 88–89.

38. *VMC.* 34: 37: “Tota vita Christi cognita ei fuit”; 43: 45: “illuminavit Jhesus Christus . . . quod cognovit”; 52: 56: “intrare cognitionem”; 57: 67: “venit iterum quedam illuminatio in cor eius et incepit cognoscere”; 66: 90: “cognitio cognitionis, videlicet quod Deus dederat ei scire, quod habuit istorum cognitionem.” It would be worthwhile to make a systematic semantic study of the terms “sapientia,” “cognitio,” and “illuminatio.”

39. *VMC.* 65: 89.

40. *VMC.* 55: 61.

41. *VMC.* 66–67: 90–93.

42. *VMC.* 67: 95.

43. *VMC.* 67: 95: “Vident [the eyes of Margaret’s soul] autem non per speciem, sed per cognitionem.” This refers to the four degrees of mystical illumination, first formulated by Augustine and adopted by Thomas Aquinas and other scholastics, of which the highest degree was that of imageless illumination. Cf. *VMC.* 56: 63: “sapientia, id est cognitio.” See also 55: 59: “eam mirabiliter illuminavit. . . quod nec cor cogitare nec lingua proferre posset, nisi quis per experientiam didicisset.”

44. *VMC.* 65: 89.

45. The master-general Jordanus of Saxony wrote in 1228: “we strictly prohibit any of our friars from striving or procuring, henceforth, that the care or supervision of nuns or any other women be committed to our brethren.” See Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, I, 389. See also Freed, “Urban Development,” 311–29.

46. Cf. Chapter 4 (Juliana), where I object to the rather condescending insights of John Coakley et al.

47. Quoted by Frank J. Tobin, *Mechthild von Magdeburg: A Medieval Mystic in Modern Eyes* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1995), 61.

48. Hadewych’s list of perfect persons in Hadewijch, *Visioenen*: ed. Willaert, 158. See also the touching exemplum of the crusade preacher John of Xanten, who visited an anchoress in Saxony, “feminam sanctam,” who had lost her Lord—this immediately calls to mind someone like Dame Margaret. John advised her to search for him in every corner of her cell and to ask, “Lord, where are You?”—which she interpreted literally. In *DM.* VI, 31: I, 382. In these examples we see common theology in action. Bernard McGinn, too, was struck by the similarities and the “community of discourse” of mystical women in the Low Countries with learned churchmen like Meister Eckhart; see his volume *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, in the introduction of which he, once again, defines his “vernacular theology.”

49. *Das Fliessende Licht*, IV, 13: 127. By inserting the conjunction “for” instead of “unless,” I intensify the thrust of this chapter.

50. *Das Fliessende Licht*, II, 26: 68.

51. *VMC.* 42: 44: God spoke to Margaret: “Non . . . dimittas eum [Johannem]. Ego enim specialiter elegi eum, quia ego in terris et in celis magnam de eo habeo laudem”; and 45: 49–50: “ut bonitatem meam in te manifestare possem, quia tu honor et laus eris mihi inter filias Ierusalem specialis. Et tu es magistra caritatis . . . Ego sum scriptor tuus . . . et omnia in me leges et cognosces et de hoc singulariter me laudabis.”

52. See Franz H. Bäuml, “*Scribe et impera*: Literacy in Medieval Germany,” *Francia* 24 (1997): 123–35, at 130.

53. Klaus Schreiner, “Laienbildung als Herausforderung für Kirche und Gesellschaft: Religiöse Vorbehalte und soziale Widerstände gegen die Verbreitung von Wissen im späten Mittelalter und in der Reformation,” *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 11 (1984): 257–354, here 270, who also makes a point of “konkurrierende Wissenssysteme mit unterschiedlichen sozialen Zuordnungen.”

54. See Gurjewitsch, *Himmliches und Irdisches Leben*, 55–128. It is important to realize that while vernacular texts gave believers direct access to divine learning, these texts lacked the authority of clerical texts all the same. See Schreiner, *Laienfrömmigkeit im späten Mittelalter*, 310–11; and McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, 153–98, here 155: “late medieval female mystics had to create new models and to construct new theological categories.”

55. *VMC.* 9: 12.

56. *VMC.* 60: 81.

57. *VMC.* 9: 12: “Ubi cumque potuit fidelitatem ostendere in operibus, non dimisit.”

58. *VMC.* 59: 72–76; 12: 14; 50: 54.

59. *VMC.* 27: 28–30; 45: 47–50.

60. Brussels, KB, MS 8609–20; see below.

61. *VMT.* 122: Thomas confessed: “Ibi autem quid viderit, estimare quidem possumus, sed non effari.”

62. Karin Glente, “Mystikerinnen aus männlicher und weiblicher Sicht: Ein Vergleich zwischen Thomas von Cantimpré und Katharina von Unterlinden,” in *Religiöse Frauenbewegung und mystische Frömmigkeit im Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Dinzelbacher and Dieter R. Bauer (Cologne & Vienna: Böhlau, 1988), 251–64; Coakley, “Friars as Confidants”; and Chapter 4 (Juliana).

63. See my “De stichtige punten,” 133.

64. MS Brussels, KB, 643–44, a manuscript with texts attributed to Alijt Bake, including her *Weg van de Ezel*, here fols. 177a–b. For Alijt Bake, see Bollmann, “‘Being a Woman of My Own,’” in *Seeing and Knowing*, ed. Mulder-Bakker, 67–96. Hadewych, *Visioenen*: ed. Willaert, 163, includes in her list of perfect persons two women on the other side of the Rhine, who lived in such great secrecy that they did not want to tell each other what they had seen in the spirit of God. And they did not want to speak the word “love” in the presence of God. Did she also know of the two women in Magdeburg?

65. *VMC.* 10: 13.

66. *Das Fließende Licht*, V, 5: 159–61. Cf. *VMC.* 5: 8. Mechthild’s use of the term “beguine” for an anchoress is in conformity with common thirteenth-century usage.

67. Hadewijch, *Brief IV*, 39–48: ed. trans. Mommaers, 34. See McGinn, “The Abyss of Love,” 95–120.

68. W. Oehl, trans., *Deutsche Mystikerbriefe des Mittelalters, 1100–1500* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1931), 213.

69. McGinn, ed., *Meister Eckhart*, 4. Later this spirituality of “acquiescence” would again play a large role in the Modern Devotion.

70. Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 236–51; see also Chapter 2 (Guibert’s mother).

71. See McGinn’s opinion in *Flowering of Mysticism*, 195: “internalising her pain, abjection, and poverty to make them the core of her experience of God.” See *VMC*. 22: 25: “anima istius fuit abissus, et deus, qui est abissus gratiae, in regno cor eius poterit adimplere”; 27: 29: “Maria abissus”; 37: 40: “abissus paupertatis”; 56: 64: “abissus cordis tui.”

72. *VMC*. 59: 73: “Regnum celorum [Matt. 6, 10] est dives honoris et caritatis et laudis. Regnum terrenum plenum est et dives penarum et paupertatis et abiectiois”; as well as *VMC*. 1: 3: God gave Margaret: “pena, abiectio et paupertas” in her life. It is especially the group around Ursula Peters that objects to this kind of aliterary interpretation; see Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung*, 64–65. Despite this restriction, it is still plausible that Margaret had actual physical pain and a form of rheumatoid arthritis, which probably reinforced her authority.

73. See *VMC*. 25–29: 27–32.

74. *VMC*. 25: 27; 29: 32; also 29: 32: “Est etiam ancilla, quia semper vult esse inter deum et hominem mediatrix”; 43: 45–46; 53: 56–57; 56: 62–64, with a whole “theology” of the “ancilla.” Cf. Hadewijch, *Brief XII*, 4: ed. trans. Mommaers, 88: “die gherechte oetmoedicheit, daers sine minnerse [= Maria] ane began, daer sine in hare met trac”: with that humility Mary drew Him into herself. In this letter Hadewych touches on several themes that we also find in Margaret.

75. It is striking how often John refers to parables from the New Testament about the servant, the steward, the servant with the talents, etc., see *VMC*. 29: 32; 55: 60, 2x; 56: 63; 58: 69; 59: 72; 66: 91.

76. Albert Fries, *Die unter dem Namen des Albertus Magnus überlieferten mariologischen Schriften* (Münster: Asschendorff, 1954); and idem, *Die Gedanken des heiligen Albertus Magnus über die Gottesmutter* (Fribourg, Schw.: Paulusverlag, 1958).

77. *VMC*. 53: 56–57.

78. *VMC*. 56: 62: “Tu enim es vas, in quod ipsa caritas est transfusa, et cuiuscumque de cetero dabitur, volo, quod ex te ei detur”; 56: 64: “Ita humilitas tua et abissus cordis tui, quod non posset sine ista gratia adimpleri, quia ista gratia, id est totus honor, quem in te volo ponere, te replebit.” Compare again Hadewych in *Brief XVIII*, 70–75: ed. trans. Mommaers, 140: “daer es de ziele ene grondeloeshet daer god hem seluen ghenoech met es. . . . Siele es een wech vanden dore vaerne gods in sine vriheit van sinen diepsten (there the soul is an abyss because God is sufficient unto Himself. . . . Soul is a passage God can navigate freely owing to its depths.)”

79. *VMC*. 57: 65.

80. See the references in note 74.

81. *VMC*. 60: 78; 79.

82. McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, 197.

83. Wilfried Ehbrecht, "Maria, Mauritius, Auctor und die Gemeinschaft der Heiligen des Bundes und der Städte," in *Manipulus Florum: Aus Mittelalter, Landesgeschichte, Literatur und Historiographie*, Festschrift Peter Johanek, ed. Ellen Widder, Mark Mesowsky, and Maria-Theresia Leuker (Münster: Waxmann, 2000), 197–249.

84. Moore, "Heresy, Repression, and Social Change," 37. Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 29–30, speaks of "deep play involved in group hearing, the emotionality it accessed, and the identifications it fostered."

85. *VMC*. 46: 51; 37: 40.

86. Richard W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1953), 132, here quoting Innocent III.

87. *VMC*. 69: 99.

88. The two oldest manuscripts are: (1) Berlin, Staatsbibl., Theol. Lat. Qu. 195, a miscellany owned by Villers, written ca. 1250 and ca. 1270 with two saints' Lives, namely Goswin of Bossut, *Vita S. Arnulfi*, the Life of a monk from Villers itself (BHL 713), and the *Vita S. Margarethae Inclusae Magdeburgi*; see Gerard Achten, *Die theologischen lateinischen Handschriften in Quarto der Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin*, I (141–266) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979), 128–29; and (2) Brussels, KB, MS 8609–20, also a miscellany written in Villers but owned by the Cistercian women's convent of Ter Cameren (Maria de Camera) near Brussels, end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century, with a large number of saints' Lives and tracts on the eucharist. Both codices consist of individual units that are now bound together but that originally could be used as separate booklets. The *Vita sanctae Margarethae cuiusdam inclusae*, on fols. 200r–239v, is a unit of this kind: the "title page" even shows some discoloration. Other quires contain the Lives of Cistercian nuns (Lutgart of Tongeren, Ida of Nivelles/Rameia, Aleid of Schaerbeek, a nun from Ter Cameren itself, and Christina the Astonishing); texts about great nonmonastic saints (Mary, Mary Magdalene, Elisabeth of Thuringia/Hungary); and a "eucharistic florilegium." See the detailed description of the MS in Ampe, "Een oud florilegium eucharisticum." Thus, both codices functioned in the heart of the new spirituality and were used for religious instruction, as well as for instruction outside the convents themselves, as I plan to demonstrate elsewhere.

In addition, see Cambrai, Bibliothèque municipale 839, fifteenth century, the main text used by the editor Schmidt for his edition and other Latin texts he mentions, 10 in total. See also my list in "Stichtige punten."

Of special interest for my argument are the vernacular versions such as the previously cited MS The Hague KB, 73 H 11, a *Passionale*, i.e., a Middle Dutch version of the *Legenda Aurea* supplemented with the Lives of local devout persons, from the Augustinian convent of Maaseik (Modern Devotion), written in 1478; and Antwerp, Archivum Capucinatorum Provinciae Flandro-Belgicae, MS

V, 149, fols. 1–261: *Het wonderlijck leven van die wonderlijcke maget Margareta diemen die creupele noemt*, a seventeenth-century manuscript in a Jesuit binding with an accurate and complete translation of the original thirteenth-century *Vita*. Nothing is known about this manuscript as yet.

89. For a methodological reflection on the issue of the reader response, see Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), 2; see also Kathleen Ashley and R. L. A. Clark, eds., *Medieval Conduct* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2001).

90. Alijt Bake, *Louteringsnacht van de actie*, ed. B. Spaapen, *Middeleeuwse Passiemystiek*, OGE 42 (1968), 374–421, here 398: “Margriete de lamme.”

91. See note 88.

Chapter 7

1. See the nuanced reflections on the cultural dynamic in medieval Christianity by John Van Engen, “The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem,” 549–52.

2. Cf. Helga Scieurie, “Vom Münzbild zum Standbild: Beobachtungen an Darstellungen deutscher Herrscherpaare des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts,” in *Auf der Suche nach der Frau im Mittelalter: Fragen, Quellen, Antworten*, ed. Bea Lundt (Munich: Fink, 1991), 135–63, who points out on 135 “der selbstbewusste Auftritt der Markgräfinnen,” even in statuary in the church building.

3. See Chapter 1 (Bees).

4. Moore, “Heresy, Repression, and Social Change,” 37.

5. An excellent introduction in Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). For the traditional view see Pierre Doyère, “Ermites,” *DDC*, V, 412–429; and idem, “Érémisme en Occident,” *DS* IV, i, 953–82.

6. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*: ed. trans. G. J. M. Bartelink, *Athanasie d’Alexandrie: Vie d’Antoine*, SC 400 (Paris: Cerf, 1994).

7. Doyère, “Ermites,” 428. The rule published by Livarius Oliger, “Regulae Tres Recluserum et Eremitarum Angliae Saec. XIII–XIV,” *Antonianum* 3 (1928): 312, therefore declares that “licet status heremitarum regula careat canonica,” hermits and anchorites live in accordance with the law of the gospel, particularly the Ten Commandments; elsewhere: “licet non ingrediatur [eremita] religionem.”

8. Hefele - Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, III, A, 568, can. 42. Monks and nuns of the “honors class” as well as the eremitic orders like the Carmaldolians and the Carthusians were, of course, included in canon law: although living in solitude they derived their status from the monastic life.

9. Doyère, “Érémisme,” 953.

10. Ignatius S. Kozik, ed. introd., *The First Desert Hero: St. Jerome’s Vita Pauli* (Mount Vernon: King Lithographers, 1968).

11. See, for both Marys, Alison Goddard Elliott, *Roads to Paradise: Reading*

the Lives of the Early Saints (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1987); see also Averil Cameron, "Early Christianity and the Discourse of Female Desire," in *Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night*, ed. Léonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler and Maria Wyke (London: Macmillan, 1994), 152–68.

12. *Regula Benedicti*, I, 3–5: ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît*, SC 182, 3 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1972), 436–38. James of Vitry, *Historia Occidentalis* XII: trans. Gaston Duchet-Suchaux, *Jacques de Vitry, Histoire Occidentale* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 109–11, follows these views on eremitism, as does the author of the *Libellus de Diversis Ordinibus et Professionibus qui sunt in Aecclesia*, ed. trans. Giles Constable and B. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 4–16, who compares the life of eremites with that of the Old Testament Abel.

13. Grimaicū, *Regula Solitariorum*: ed. PL 103, 577–664.

14. Doyère, "Ermîtes," 417.

15. Doyère, "Ermîtes," 420; in his opinion they deserve a separate study—a point well taken.

16. Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity"

17. *Byen Boec* II, 52; ex. 251: ed. Stutvoet, 227.

18. These Lives are of course also literary constructs, but of "historical" eremites, in whose life fellow human beings play a crucial role. The fact that we have to read these texts in poor and outdated editions in *PL* is characteristic of the scholarly situation: normative, formal texts do get attention, but "historical" and informal ones do not. For Germany, see, however, the work of Ulla Williams, *Die "Alemannischen" Vitaspatrum: Untersuchungen und Edition* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996). A close comparison of the *Vitaspatrum* with the exempla collections of the thirteenth century might bring to light surprising parallels.

19. Joseph M. Soler, "Les mères du désert et la maternité spirituelle," *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 48 (1986): 235–50.

20. Clément Lialine, "Éremitisme en Orient," *DS*, IV, i, 939–54, here 938, where the author quotes Cassianus.

21. Broeder Geraert, *Sinte Kerstinen heiligen leven*, vs. 611–14.

22. Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum Libri Decem*, VIII, 15: ed. Rudolf Buchner, *Gregor von Tours, Zehn Bücher Geschichten*, 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1955), II, 176–82.

23. Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule du Nord*.

24. Henrietta Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe, 1000–1150* (London: Macmillan, 1984), erroneously views these hermits only as precursors of the new monasticism.

25. Stocker, "Die Opfergeräte der heiligen Wiborada"; see Chapter 3 (Yvette).

26. See Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *De kluizenaar in de eik: Gerlach van Houthem en zijn verering* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995); see also the innovative studies of Ludo Milis, such as "Ermîtes et chanoines réguliers au XIIe siècle," *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 22 (1979): 39–80.

27. An interesting example from the South is Guibert's uncle, see Chapter 2, also the legendary hermit-knight Mengold of Huy, for whom see Philippe George, "Noble, chevalier, pénitent, martyr: L'idéal de sainteté d'après une 'Vita' mosane (Mengold) du xii^e s.," *Le Moyen Âge* 89 (1983): 357–80.

28. For Aybert of Crespin, see Charles Dereine, “Ermites, reclus et recluses dans l’ancien diocèse de Cambrai entre Scarpe et Haine (1075–1125),” *RB* 97 (1987): 289–313, here 301–5.

29. Following the reorientation of Trent, some canonists considered recognizing hermits. Cardinal Lambertini, the legislator-pope Benedict XIV, proved receptive to this in his *De Synodo Diocesana*, VI, iii, 6, but other canonists were less accommodating. The revised canon law of 1917 again includes no recognition at all.

30. Vauchez, *La sainteté en occident*, 384.

31. *Lex Ribuaria*, 12: ed. *MGH Leges*, sectio I: *Leges Nationum Germanicarum* III, ii, 73, on the manslaughter of fertile and infertile women; Hefele and Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles* II, ii, 803, on the Council of Chalcedon, 451. Justinian repeats this in his *Corpus iuris* and Gratian in his *Decretum*: ed. Friedberg, I, col. 1055: “Diaconissam non debere ante annos quadraginta ordinari statutus, et . . . cum diligentibus probatione.”

32. *VCM*. 637–60. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, “The Prime of Their Lives: Women and Age, Wisdom and Religious Careers in Northern Europe,” in *New Trends*, ed. Dor et al., 215–36, here 218–22.

33. Thomas of Cantimpré [Cantimpratensis], *Liber de Natura Rerum*, editio princeps: ed. H. Boese (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), 80–82. In the very first caput, p. 13, Thomas, writing about the human head, distinguishes between the cranial suture of men and women: “Caput hominis . . . ex duro osse creatum est, in qua sunt multe suture, in viris precipue. Una vero sutura est circumdans in capitibus mulierum” (emphasis mine). See, for life-cycle treatises Mary Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man’s Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and John A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).

34. See below.

35. Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, *Mother Nature: Natural Selection and the Female of the Species* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), in particular 273–87, here 282.

36. Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women*, and her recent paper “Unveiling Anglo-Saxon Nuns,” in *Women and Religion in Medieval England*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Oxbow Books 2003), 13–31.

37. I am reminded here of the striking fabliau of a young man who does not know what to do with his bride. She calls on her mother for help, who pulls up her skirts and gives her son-in-law a lesson about female sexual organs. Evidently this could be done in a “sex-neutral” way because the mother had passed the age of sexual attractiveness. See Willem Noomen and Nico van den Boogaard, eds., *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, 9 vols. (Assen: Prakke, 1983–96), V, 327–35. I thank Wim Noomen for his help. See also the volume *The Prime of Their Lives: Wise, Old Women in Pre-Industrial Europe*, ed. Renée Nip and myself (Louvain: Peeters, forthcoming).

38. Henrietta Moore, “The Cultural Constitution of Gender,” in *The Polity Reader in Gender Studies*, ed. idem et al. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 14–27. In sociological and demographic studies on old age such as D. Ketzner and Peter Laslett, eds., *Aging in the Past: Demography, Society, and Old Ages* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1995), disappointingly little attention is given to older women.

39. Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 24–35.

40. William of St. Thierry, *De Natura et Dignitate Amoris*, 25: ed. Marie Madeleine Davy, *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry: Deux traités de l'amour de Dieu* (Paris: Vrin, 1953), 21.

41. Hadewijch, *Brief XVIII*, 80–96: ed. trans. Mommaers, 140. See Jan van Mierlo, “Hadewijch en Wilhelm van St. Thierry,” *OGE* 3 (1929): 45–59; Paul Verdeijen, “De invloed van Willem van Saint-Thierry”; and Kurt Ruh, “Die Augen der Liebe bei Wilhelm von St. Thierry,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 45 (1989): 103–14. It seems to me that Hadewych is here taking a stand against the ideas of Thomas Aquinas in *Summa contra Gentiles* I, 14; see Jean-Pierre Torrell, “Saint Thomas d’Aquin, maître de vie spirituelle,” *Revue des sciences religieuses* 71 (1997): 454, where he quotes Thomas: “nous ne pouvons pas [connaître le substance divin] en connaissant ‘ce qu’elle est’ (quid est). Nous en auront pourtant une certaine connaissance en sachant ‘ce qu’elle n’est pas’ (quid non est).”

42. Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik II*, speaks here of a new type of mysticism typical of women.

43. See also Eph. 4: 11: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” Cf. 1 Cor. 12: 28; Eph. 2: 20; Acts 16 (see below). Ambrose, in his *Hexameron* III, 12, 50, writes: “Posuit [God] in ecclesia [viewed as a vineyard] velut turrim apostolorum et prophetarum atque doctorum, qui solent pro ecclesiae pace praetendere,” quoted in N. Greinacher, “Apostel, Propheten und Lehrer—damals und heute,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 171 (1991): 46–63, here 54. The discussion about (lay) prophets flared up again in the wake of Vatican II, according to Hans Küng, “What Is the Essence of Apostolic Succession?” *Concilium* 4 (1968): 16–19; and Avery Dulles, “The Succession of Prophets in the Church,” *Concilium* 4 (1968): 28–32. Greinacher goes so far as to claim, “wenn die Kirche dem Gesetz ihres Anfangs treu bleiben will, dann darf es sich nicht nur eine apostolische Sukzession, sondern muss es auch eine prophetische Sukzession geben.”

44. *DM*, VIII, 39: II, 111–13.

45. Three studies about Mary have proved extremely fruitful for me: Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*; Klaus Schreiner, *Maria: Jungfrau, Mutter, Herrscherin* (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1994); and Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996). And for Marian devotion: the volume edited by Hedwig Röckelein et al., *Maria: Abbild oder Vorbild?*; Gabriella Signori, *Maria zwischen Kathedrale, Kloster und Welt: Hagiographische und historiographische Annäherung an eine hochmittelalterliche Wunderpredigt* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1995); and Marzena Górecka, *Das Bild Mariens in der Deutschen Mystik des Mittelalters* (Bern: Lang, 1999). The recently published book by Rachel Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), does not offer much relevant information for me after her study of the Song of Songs (see below).

46. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, Chapters 5 and 6.

47. Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Institutione Inclusarum*: ed. trans. Charles Dumont, *La vie de reclus*, SC 76 (Paris: Cerf, 1961); English trans. in *The Works of Aelred of Rievaulx* (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1971), I, 41–102: *A Rule of Life for a Recluse*, here 80–81. See the finely argued interpretation by Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, "Aelred of Rievaulx: The Recluse and Death According to the *Vita Inclusarum*," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 34 (1999): 183–202. See also John R. R. Tolkien, ed., *Ancrene Wisse: The English Text of the Ancrene Wisse Edited from the CCCC 402* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 21: the anchoress, as a virgin recluse, had to mimic Mary and make her anchorhold, like her body, ready to receive Christ.

48. Ilene H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972).

49. Michael Clanchy, "Law and Love in the Middle Ages," in *Disputes and Settlement: Law and Human Relations in the West*, ed. John Bossy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 47–68; Jo Ann McNamara, "Imitatio Helenae: Sainthood as an Attribute to Queenship," in *Saints: Studies in Hagiography*, ed. Sandro Sticca (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval Center, 1996), 51–80.

50. *DM*. VII, 45–46; II, 64–66.

51. Rupert of Deutz, *Rupertus Tvitiensis, Commentaria in Canticum Canticorum*: ed. Hrabanus Haacke, CCCM 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974), from which I quote with Bible verses and lines of the edition. On Rupert, see Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*; and McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 328–33. On Rupert's commentary, see the groundbreaking study by Rachel Fulton, "Mimetic Devotion, Marian Exegesis, and the Historical Sense of the Song of Songs," *Viator* 27 (1996): 85–116.

52. Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 25, speaks in such cases of the "methodology of amplification."

53. Cant. 5, 7: 417–19: "deprompsi in aperto, uidelicet necessaria multumque profutura praedicando uel conscribendo dilecti euangelio."

54. Cant. 5: 6–8, 313–18; 5: 9, 472; think of Yvette and Lame Margaret imitating this in their own lives.

55. Cant. 5, 9: 472; and Rupertus Tutiensis, *In Euangelium S. Joannis Commentariorum Libri XIV*: ed. PL 169, 790B.

56. The NT has *douloi* for male and *doulai* for female servants. To make the parallel visible, it is therefore better to translate the feminine *doule* with *serua* instead of with the deviant *ancilla* as the Vulgate does; see the following note—think also of John's use of the servant metaphor in his *Life of Lame Margaret*.

57. Acts 2: 17–18; see Pelikan's commentary in *Mary Through the Centuries*, 84–85.

58. Cant. 8, 2: 73–91: "lectores atque lectrices, cantores atque cantatrices, sacerdotes siue pontifices propheticae atque catholicae gratiae appropinquantes." Rupert's commentary on the Song of Songs attracted a great deal of attention in his time; we still have ten manuscripts from the twelfth century and more than forty in total. In his old age he confessed that as a young adult he had despaired of ever gaining insight into Holy Scripture. Illuminated by divine

inspiration—like the recluses in my book—the true interpretation of the Bible had become clear to him. Thus Rupert also walked the second path of knowledge, that of *Minne*. His interpretation went further than what he had learned from the Church Fathers or the *magistri*—and it was for this reason that they were so critical of him. But the mystical visions gave him “that deeper understanding of Scripture, which ‘authorized’ his own writing,” according to Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, 351. Truly, we here find a scholar that the women could have considered congenial, cf. McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 333: “These visions mark the abbot of Deutz as the ancestor of a complex vein of authenticating mystical experiences that will grow richer in the later Middle Ages.”

59. Vauchez, *Sainteté en occident*, 254–55.

60. Brenda M. Bolton, “Spiegels van vroomheid: Relieken van Maria van Oignies,” in *De dynamiek van religie en cultuur: Geschiedenis van het Nederlands Katholicisme*, Festschrift M. Spierts, ed. Marit Montero et al. (Kampen: Kok, 1993), 124–37. Vauchez, *Sainteté en occident*, 257, had earlier concluded: “dans l’Europe du Nord-Ouest, il semble bien que la sensibilité aux formes nouvelles de la sainteté soit demeurée un phénomène essentiellement clérical.” James even gave Mary’s finger bone to Pope Gregory IX when he was suffering from depression.

61. Vauchez, *Sainteté en occident*, 167–203, on local saints. Some of the women in question were eventually canonized in the age of the Counter Reformation or in the twentieth century.

62. Vauchez, *Sainteté en occident*, especially 256: “Pourtant cette efflorescence de sainteté [in Brabant-Liège and Rhineland-Thuringia] n’a pas débouché—contrairement à ce qui se passait dans l’Europe méditerranée—sur des cultes publics et, encore moins, sur des procès de canonisation. Ces béguines menaient certes une existence discrète et retirée au fond de leur reclusoir ou de leur convict, mais n’en allait-il pas de même en Italie ou en Provence où on les vénérait déjà de leur vivant? La différence entre les deux ensembles géographiques que nous avons distingués se situe moins, à notre avis, au niveau de la sainteté vécue qu’à celui de la sainteté effectivement perçue par les milieux qui étaient à l’origine de la dévotion.” Even though certain elements in Vauchez’s thesis are disputable (the anchoresses did not live all that discreetly and, as we shall see, were venerated during their lifetime), he here identifies a striking feature of women in the Low Countries.

63. See my “The Invention of Saintliness: Texts and Contexts,” in *The Invention of Saintliness*, ed. idem (London: Routledge, 2002), 3–23. Interestingly Mayr-Harting, “Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse,” 338, also points out that in the *Life of Wulfric* the English recluse is placed in the service of “the power of the human mind to achieve direct union with Christ and in the innate capacity of human beings to effect their own moral improvement,” not of canonization or the propagation of a cult.

64. See Mulder-Bakker, “The Invention of Saintliness,” 8–12.

65. Thomas of Cantimpré [Cantimpratanus], *Vita Lutgardis* 2, 27: 201: “Vidisti, ait, illam *sanctam mulierem*?” Italics mine.

66. I owe this term to Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive*. In Renaissance Italy a phenomenon appears to have evolved similar to that in the lowlands in the

twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The difference is that the Italian women also demonstrated thaumaturgic gifts and continued to be venerated after their death.

67. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altar: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 175.

68. VJ. Prologue: 2: “sic exempla eorum [Juliana and the others], qui iam de hoc seculo sunt assumpti, veluti in rem presentem per scriptorum memoriam revocari”; also: “nostra tempora multos sanctos habuerint, et adhuc habeant, atque sanctas, non solum mulieribus sed et viris in virtutem exercitiis et profectibus imitandas.” “Exemplum” or “imitandum” appears six times in the Prologue. Also: “who does not want to see the holy virgin, *intuere*, not only in books but inscribed in the deeds and feelings of Juliana herself, *sed scriptam in iuliane moribus et sensibus*?”

69. Gurjewitsch [Gurevich], *Himmliches und Irdisches Leben*, 55–128.

Chapter 8

1. See for example, Hugh’s letter to his order general Humbert, into which he inserts a bull by Innocent IV about the *curia monialium*. In Heinrich Finke, *Ungedruckte Dominikanerbriefe des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1891), 52–53, no. 4; also Innocent IV’s protection bull for beguines in which he quotes *Gloriam virginalem*; see M. Bär, ed., *Osnabrücker Urkundenbuch*, 4 vols. repr. (Osnabrück: Wenner, 1977), IV, 434, no. 677. See also the references in Chapter 5 (Eve).

2. I take this from the later Middle Dutch charter for the beguinage of St. Truiden (1420) in which Paquay, “Het eerste statuut der begijnhoven,” sees a partial translation of the charter of 1246; here 190: “we therefore, manifoldly praising your desire and sincerity in the Lord, take you and your possessions totally out of the world and under our protection.” However, 193: “knowing that beguines who are not subject to a mistress of any house will never receive or be entitled to use freedoms of privileges . . .” The charter of 1420 (for a beguinage) spoke, of course, only of beguines. The original *Libellus* of Pantaleon must have included recluses as well, to judge from the summary of the document of 1266.

3. Miracus and Foppens, *Opera diplomatica*, I, 429–30: “collegii Beghinarum et Recluserum;” see also Chapter 5.

4. Leonard Ennen, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Köln*, 6 vols. (Cologne: Dumont, 1863), II, 270, no. 270.

5. G. Monchamp, “La Fête-Dieu à Liège en 1251,” *Leodium* 1 (1901): 3–6, here 5–6.

6. Sassen, *Hugo von St. Cher*, 154–58; Émile Schoolmeesters, “Les actes du cardinal légat Hugues de Saint-Cher en Belgique durant les années de sa légation,” *Leodium* 6 (1907): 150–66, 172–76.

7. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 261: Appendix, no. 4.

8. Ennen, ed., *Quellen*, II, 306–7, no. 301.

9. Sassen, *Hugo von St. Cher*, 154–58. For the problem of *cura animarum*, see Chapter 5.

10. See the enclosure ritual in Chapter 3 (Yvette).
11. "Epistele aen eenre clusennersse," in *Gerardi Magni Epistolae*, ed. Willem Mulder (Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1933), 265–68, quotation 267: "dat hi hem niet en gheboet, noch te ghebieden en hadde, mer dat hi hem gheraden hadde."
12. Prims, "Kluizen," published *Ordinantien* according to a text from Mechelen consisting of 21 points; the *Analecta Gijberti Coeverincx*, II, 64–71, a text of thirteen points. A similar sort of ordinance was found in an anchorhold in Vught; see the next note.
13. *Ordonnantien ende regelen*, published by Van Dijck, "Kluizenareses in en rond 's-Hertogenbosch," 18: "and she shall never speak except on Thursdays between vespers and lauds, that is, from three to five . . . and shall speak to no one except to those who have first requested permission."
14. Utrechts Archief, bisschoppelijk archief, regs. 9 and 10; see S. Muller, *Fzn, Regesten van het Archief der Bisschoppen van Utrecht (722–1528)*, 4 vols. (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1917), I, between nos. 1369 and 1565.
15. To the extent that inventories have been made—see the studies referred to in Chapter 1—they confirm this impression. Research for my own inventory, which includes many more anchorholds, will be completed in the near future.
16. Catharina van der Graft, ed., *Een boecxken gemaket ende bescreven van suster Bertken* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1955), with a study and a text edition of the first printing of 1516; A. Ampe, "De Geschriften van Suster Bertken," *OGE* 30 (1956): 281–320; Klaas Heeroma, "Het ingeklusde lied," *Maatstaf* 16 (1968–69): 433–54; José J. van Aelst, "Geordineert na dye getijden: Suster Bertkens passieboekje," *OGE* 69 (1995): 133–56; idem, "Suffering with the Bridegroom: The 'Innighe Sprake' of the Utrecht Recluse Suster Bertken," *OGE* 71 (1997): 228–49; a brief overview is given by Llewellyn Bogaers, "Kluizenares midden in de wereld: Suster Bertkens antwoord op haar beladen familiegeschiedenis," *Trajecta* 7 (1998): 296–318. Cf. also H. Vynckier, "Poetry from Behind Bars: Some Translations from the Dutch Recluse Sister Bertken (1427–1514)," *Mystics Quarterly* 14 (1988): 143–53. The songs are presently being researched and republished by Fons van Buuren.
17. Written on the title page of the *Legenda Aurea* (Strasbourg, 1496), in Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, H fol. 252 rariora—Jheropolis was a bishopric *in partibus infidelium*.
18. Wim H. Vroon, "Suster Bertkens doopzeel," *De Nieuwe Taalgids* (1958): 168–71.
19. Van der Graft, *Een Boecxken*, 70.
20. Geert Groote complained bitterly in his letter about the gossiping of anchoresses: "And in truth many a person who sits in an anchorhold does more mixing and talking with people than if he sat on the marketplace. . . . And that is why one can as well get gossip from the recluses as on the market square"; *Gerardi Magni Epistolae*, 68.

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